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# **GREEK LITERATURE**



# GREEK LITERATURE

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Greeks were the most intellectual people of the old world. They were explorers in every field of knowledge and art, where they showed in the highest degree the desire for truth and the love of the beautiful. Freedom of thought and deed seemed to them essential to happiness and self-development ; while a sense of fitness and dislike of excess saved them, as a rule, from wildness of imagination or impropriety of action. Ancient Greece was never a great nation, as Assyria and Persia were great. In a small country divided into countless valleys and tracts, little city-states arose and worked out on a small scale and in a short time the whole process of growth, maturity, and decay. The genial climate of Greece helped the quick advance of man, and the narrow seas facilitated commerce and lured the adventurer abroad. Thus the Greeks were by nature and circumstances chosen to be the educators of Europe. They founded philosophy, natural science, mathematics, medicine, music, and political economy. Almost every literary form used at the present day can be traced back to a Greek original. In architecture and sculpture the Greeks have given models to every school. Greece by her instruction equipped Rome for her great civilising work : and it was in the Greek tongue, in a

language enriched by Greek thinkers, that the world received the Christian religion.

The study of Greek literature is therefore a proper element in a liberal education. The Greek language, naturally flexible and rich in poetical words, becomes in the hands of the great writers a medium of unequalled force, clearness, and adaptability, able to express as well the highest aspirations of the poet as the subtlest shades of philosophical argument or the most abstruse technicalities. The books of Greece have passed the critical selection of the ages, and the student, unencumbered by masses of inferior material, can approach the works of acknowledged masters, the true fountain-head of European culture.

*Note.*—The dates of many Greek authors being uncertain, the approximate time of their activity, indicated by *floruit circa* (*fl. c.*), is all that can be given. The bibliography is only a limited selection, and is confined to books needing no knowledge of Greek.

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# GREEK LITERATURE

## CHAPTER I

### HOMER AND THE EPIC

EXTANT Greek literature seldom gives a glimpse of any immature effort or feeble striving after artistic form. Each type of composition seems to dawn in its full splendour. The earliest Greek epics have not only been the models for all European epic poets, but are in themselves the final standard of unsurpassable perfection.

The two chief poems ascribed to Homer are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* we have in twenty-four books a series of episodes from the Trojan war. Paris, son of Priam, King of Troy, has carried off from Sparta Helen, wife of Menelaus. To avenge this wrong the latter calls in his brother Agamemnon, King of Argos, who leads against Troy a host of Achaeans from the chief cities in Greece. For nearly ten years the war drags on. The Trojans are blockaded and most of their land and small cities plundered. Then a quarrel arises between Agamemnon and the mightiest of the Achaean champions, Achilles. The latter refuses to fight, and his Wrath is announced as the subject of the *Iliad*. The re-

maining Achæan heroes are no match for Hector, the mighty man of Troy, but by the fickle interference of the gods in the struggle, the fortunes of battle are various. At last the Achæans are driven back to their ships, when Achilles, hitherto deaf to all pleading, now gives his harness to Patroclus, his squire, and sends him to fight in his stead. Hector, though forewarned of his own fate, slays and despoils Patroclus. Thereupon Achilles, infuriated at his friend's death and rearmed with the divine armour made by Hephaestus, rushes into the fray, pursues and overcomes Hector, and drags his body round the walls of Troy. The aged Priam comes as a suppliant to beg for his son's body. Achilles grants it, and the *Iliad* ends with the burial of Hector.

Most of these central incidents in the story are contained in a few books, especially i., ix., xv., and xvi. The others are mainly episodic, giving great battle-pieces with the exploits of various heroes, councils of the gods and their influence on the war, scenes in the besieged city such as the conversations of Paris and Helen, or the parting of Hector from his wife Andromache, the funeral games for Patroclus, and lastly the catalogue in Book ii. of the captains on both sides and their forces.

Few critics would now assert the *Iliad* to be the work of one man. Apart from the disconnectedness of the story there are differences in dialect, in historical and archæological conditions between one passage and another, which suggest composite authorship. The Homeric question was debated in antiquity, and since the publication of Wolf's *Prolego-*

*mena* in 1795 every conceivable theory as to the origin of the poems has been held. The age of excavation beginning with Schliemann (publications 1881 onwards) has only added fresh material to the controversy. The following account may be put forward as fairly representative of modern views.

In the *Iliad* the Achaeans inhabit Greece, but Asia Minor is still barbarian. Agamemnon, the greatest Achaean chief, rules over the plain of Argos, which was the centre of the bronze age culture in southern Greece. Achilles, on the other hand, is a Thessalian hero, so that there may be a confusion with the Thessalian Argos. The Dorians, who predominated in southern Greece in historical times, have not yet made their great invasion. But even the Achaeans seem to have been newcomers. We hear of them as a tall, fair-haired race, using iron weapons and burning their dead, while the bronze-age or Mycenaean people buried theirs. On the other hand, all the Homeric sites so far explored have yielded Mycenaean remains, and there is enough cultural likeness to suggest that at any rate the origin of epic tradition lies in the Mycenaean age. Possibly Agamemnon and his house represent a northern dynasty ruling a less warlike but more civilised Aegaeon people. The central event of the Homeric poems, namely the siege of Troy, had some foundation in fact. The Achaean race is spreading eastwards, perhaps under pressure of the Dorian invasion, or even earlier, and the walled city commanding the Hellespont must have been a great barrier to their progress. No less than six cities have stood and fallen on the site of Troy ;

the siege of such a stronghold may well have become famous in song. It is well known that traditions and legends tend to group themselves round famous sites or incidents, and in this way we may explain the transference to Asia of the Thessalian myth of Achilles.

The honour of composing out of current lays an epic of outstanding merit on the Wrath of Achilles is claimed for a nameless poet of Asia Minor singing in the Aeolian dialect and living perhaps at Smyrna some time between 1000 and 800 B.C. The Aeolians were the first Greek settlers in Asia, and the dialect of Homer has traces of Aeolic. Then about two centuries later the real "Homer," an Ionian minstrel, possibly a native of Chios, worked up the "Wrath" into a great poem which was substantially our Iliad. The dialect he changed as far as possible into Ionic, and modified a few of the descriptions to suit the taste of his own age. In weaving together traditional sagas he gave his work enough cohesion to hold the attention of his hearers, while he enriched the older epic with episodes of incomparable dignity, fire, and pathos. This "Homer" was the chief of a school or clan of minstrels called Homeridae, to whom we owe the latest portions of the Iliad, and the other epic poems to be mentioned below.

The companion poem to the Iliad is the Odyssey, also in twenty-four books. Odysseus, King of Ithaca, an island of Western Greece, had fought at Troy, and is setting out for home. On the way he incurs the wrath of the Sun-god and of Poseidon, whereby his return is delayed for ten years by adventures in the



fabulous regions on the borderland of ancient geography. Odysseus is a typical Ionian hero, the patient man of endless resource, a good warrior, but preferring persuasion to force. This steadfast wisdom and the favour of Athena finally bring him safely out of his troubles. The poet also shows us the state of Ithaca in its ruler's absence: the young Telemachus, unable to control his subjects: the faithful Queen Penelope, beset by insolent suitors, and finally rewarded by the return and triumph of Odysseus. The personality of the hero gives the *Odyssey* more apparent unity than the *Iliad*. The ancients believed it to have been a work of Homer's old age, but in comparing it with the *Iliad* we find more signs of altered conditions than could be covered by the lifetime of a single poet.

The gods in the *Iliad* are glorified human beings and take part in the Trojan war. Zeus holds a doubtful sway, his consort Hera being often in rebellion. In the *Odyssey* Zeus is supreme, and the gods dwell on Mount Olympus, remote from the strife of men. Land in the *Iliad* is held by the community and farmed in common, while in the *Odyssey* private ownership is established. These are only a few differences among many which have led scholars to assume a separate authorship for the *Odyssey*. Indeed it is now generally held (since the theory of Kirchhoff, 1859) that our *Odyssey* is itself an expansion of a lay on the Return of Odysseus, into which a short saga about Telemachus has been woven. This hypothetical "kernel" is found chiefly in Books v.-xiii. We may say then that most of the

Odyssey is contemporary with the latest books of the Iliad.

Inferior to the Iliad in pathos and sublimity, the Odyssey has a unique charm as an adventure-story and fairy tale. It is less savage than the warlike Iliad. We leave din of battle for the toil of the oars and touch the dreamy land of the lotus-eaters, or linger in Calypso's enchanted grotto, or roam in wonder through the gardens and palace of Alcinous.

The metre of the Greek epic is the dactylic hexameter. It had perhaps been first used in primitive ritual, and was adopted by the Delphic Oracle for its responses. Homer's versification is perfect. His hexameters are rippling, swift, and sonorous. The Greek tongue with its long and short vowels, its musical pitch-accent, and its richness in light terminations, flows easily and strongly in this metre. Virgil's hexameters are mellow and stately, perfect in their own way, but not Homeric. No modern language has been able to approach the effect of the Greek epic verse.

The Homeric poems were worked up from traditional lays, and a striking token of their origin is seen in the recurrence of whole lines and stock epithets applied especially to gods and heroes. Thus daybreak is regularly announced by the line, "Now when early Dawn shone forth, the rosy-fingered." Hera is "Ox-eyed," Athena "Grey-eyed," Zeus "Cloud-gatherer," Achilles "Swift of foot," Agamemnon "Shepherd of the host." In this we see the simplicity of the early poets, who do not yet crave for constant variety in expression, and are content

to let their characters go about under their crudely explicit labels. Homer is famed for the beauty of his imagery. He usually keeps his similes to adorn the great events in the narrative. The similes themselves are taken from all kinds of familiar scenes, the sea, nature, handicraft, and daily life. The Achaean array is compared to tribes of birds that "fly hither and thither joying in their plumage and with loud cries settle ever onward," and again to flies "that hover about a herdsman's steading in the spring time, when milk drencheth the pails." But the supreme merit of the poems lies in their simple directness, their power of swift narration, and the whole-hearted absorption of the poet in the story that he tells.

Homer had a profound and lasting influence over Greek literature. His poems were recited in all Greek cities and learned in every school. But although writing was known at the time when most of the epics were composed, we cannot tell how far an art still unfamiliar and chiefly applied to short inscriptions was used by poets. At any rate the rhapsodists or professional reciters were the chief agents in spreading the knowledge of Homer. Great as their services in this way must have been, they were liable to mistakes or tempted to interpolate lines to gratify the local patriotism of their hearers. Solon (600 B.C.) is said to have passed a law to regulate public recitations at Athens, and the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus (550-527 B.C.) is credited with having ordered an official recension of the poems. Although this recension is now held to be a fiction,

the fact remains that Athens took the epics under a kind of protection, which has left traces of Attic dialect in Homer. By the end of the sixth century the poems were current in practically the same form as they have reached us, though the work of the Alexandrian critics, of whom Aristarchus (160 B.C.) was the greatest, helped to purify and explain the text.

**The Minor Epics.**—The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* only represent a small part of the poetry dealing with the Trojan war and the Trojan cycle of legends. The remaining parts of the story were worked up into epics by the so-called “Cyclic” poets ranging in date from the eighth to the sixth century. These poems, which finally covered the whole ground of the Trojan expedition, the fall of Troy, and the home-coming of the heroes, were admittedly far inferior to the true Homeric poems, and only fragments now survive.

Another group of lost poems clustered round Thebes, the most famous being the *Thebais*. Both cycles supplied endless plots to the Greek tragedians, from whose works and from the Latin *Thebais* of Statius we can infer at any rate the subjects presented.

The so-called **Homeric Hymns** or preludes were composed by the rhapsodists to introduce recitations from the longer epics. They are in honour of various gods, and may have been intended for the festivals where Homer was recited. Thirty-four of these survive, and date from the seventh century B.C. downwards. The most famous are the hymn to the Delian Apollo,

which gives an agreeable picture of the festival at Delos ; and that to Demeter, describing her wanderings in search of Persephone. The diction of the hymns is closely copied from Homer, under whose name they passed in antiquity.

**Hesiod.**—From the courts of Aeolian and Ionian princes, the patrons of epic poets and rhapsodes, we pass to a barren countryside in Boeotia, where Hesiod's father, an Aeolian of Cyme in Asia, had reclaimed a strip of waste land near Mount Helicon. On its owner's death the little farm was divided between Hesiod and his brother Perses ; but the latter, by bribing the lords of the district, gained the larger share for himself. Perses was a shiftless, unsuccessful farmer, and for him and his like Hesiod composed the *Works and Days*. In the eighth century the peasant's lot was hard. The nobles held the best land and oppressed the poor. Trade is growing, but the Greeks are still terribly afraid of the sea. The *Works and Days* is the first didactic poem. It begins with exhortations to Perses and to the unjust judges, the text of the sermon being the need for work. This is emphasized by the legend of Prometheus who stole fire from heaven, and of Zeus' consequent wrath and his punishment of man by the sending of Pandora, the type of feminine deception, with her jar in which all the ills of the world were stored. The Five Ages of man, embodying the Greek belief in the fallen state of humanity, are also described. Then follow the precepts of agriculture, as it was practised by small peasant farmers : next a series of maxims and proverbs, such as all primi-

tive folk have evolved ; and finally the calendar (by the moon) of lucky and unlucky days. Hesiod is a true tiller of the soil, shrewd, selfish, discontented, superstitious. The Greeks respected his ethical teaching, such as it was : the Romans, greater lovers of the country, valued his agricultural advice, which inspired Virgil in his *Georgics* ; but the modern reader is chiefly concerned with the picture of Hesiod's times and surroundings, and to hear from him a voice not of kings or heroes but from the heart of the people.

The *Theogony* is a didactic poem on the birth of the gods and their warfare with the Titans which ended in the dominion of Zeus. It became the great textbook of Greek religion. A poem called *Eoiae* on heroines who had wedded gods is almost wholly lost. The epic fragment called the *Shield of Heracles* was ascribed to Hesiod, but is by a later imitator of Homer. Hesiod used the epic hexameter, but, except for rare flights, his style is prosaic. The poems have come down to us in a mixture of Aeolic and Ionic dialect, the latter element being perhaps due to Ionian recitation and adaptation.

HOMER—Translations : *Iliad*, Lang, Leaf, and Myers. *Odyssey*, Butcher and Lang (prose) ; Cotterill, Mackail. Both these are recent verse. Older versions : Chapman, Pope, Cowper. General : Browne, *Homeric Study* ; Jebb, *Introduction to Homer* ; Murray, *Rise of the Greek Epic* ; Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*. HESIOD—Trans., &c., Mair. HYMNS—Trans., Lang.

## CHAPTER II

## LYRIC, ELEGIAC, AND IAMBIC POETRY

WE have now passed from the Heroic age into historical times. By the eighth century the Greeks are settled in their lasting abode on the coast of Asia Minor, the Aegean islands, and the mainland of Greece. Colonies are being planted in Italy and Sicily, in the northern Aegean regions, and on the Black Sea. The Greeks were a disunited people. Every city was a political unit, whose independence could only be given up under the strongest inducement or necessity. Racial divisions also existed. The Aeolian, Ionian, and Dorian folk had their own dialects and tribal cults, and developed their own literature. The Ionian cities of the middle coast of Asia Minor, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Miletus, with the island of Chios, rose in the seventh and sixth centuries to great splendour. Monarchy, the Homeric form of government, gives place to oligarchy, and this in its turn to tyranny, an unconstitutional kingship resting on force, followed in most cities by complete democracy. The genius of the Ionians is scientific and methodical. Their poetry is reflective, sententious, and satirical. In pure emotion they were far surpassed by the Aeolian Greeks of northern Asia Minor and Lesbos.

The Greeks, in spite of their separation, were always aware of their underlying unity; and in the sixth century the growth of trade and intercourse, together with the common dangers that began to press upon the race, brought its scattered elements

closer together, until the patriotism of united Greece repulsed the Persian enslaver at Salamis and Plataea.

Most of the Greek lyric poets are only known to us in short fragments quoted by later writers ; but enough remains to show the exquisite skill of the greater lyrists. Lyric poetry had various forms, such as religious and processional hymns, choral or solo ; odes of victory, dirges, wedding-songs, drinking-catches ; poems of the emotions, love-songs, political lampoons. The chief poets wrote in several of these classes. Music was essential to a lyric poem, and the poet was generally also the composer. The accompaniment was played on the lyre or seven-stringed lute.

Aeolian poetry reached its height at Lesbos, where in a society rich, brilliant, passionate, but torn with the bitterest party strife, Alcaeus and Sappho composed their immortal works. **Sappho** (*fl.* c. 580) is the world's greatest poetess. "Of all the poets of the world," says Mr. Addington Symonds, "and of all the illustrious artists of all literatures, Sappho is the one whose every word has a peculiar and unmistakable perfume, a seal of absolute perfection and inimitable grace." Her odes were inspired by sentimental attachments to young girls, among whom she formed a school of poetry. The longest fragment is addressed to Aphrodite, whom she implores to aid her, as aforetime, in winning the heart of her beloved. Elsewhere we see a wonderful feeling for nature and a beauty of imagery which may be imperfectly mirrored in the Latin lyrists. **Alcaeus** (*fl.* c. 600), a friend of Sappho, is a Lesbian cavalier,



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a man of war and faction, hating tyrants and despising the people, a man of love, wine, and song. To him is ascribed the invention both of the Alcaic and of the Sapphic metres, which were used freely by Horace and later writers.

Although poetry like that of Alcaeus and Sappho is almost untranslatable, some notion of their spirit can be gathered from the following versions, one of a fragment of Alcaeus by Col. Mure, the other by Symonds of the Aphrodite ode already mentioned (four stanzas quoted).

“From floor to roof the spacious palace halls  
    Glitter with war’s array.  
With burnished metal clad, the lofty walls  
    Beam like the bright noon-day.  
There white-plumed helmets hang from many a nail  
    Above in threatening row.  
Steel-garnished tunics and broad coats of mail  
    Spread o’er the space below.  
Chalcidian blades enow, and belts are here,  
    Greaves and emblazoned shields,  
Well-tried protectors from the hostile spear  
    On other battle-fields.  
With these good helps our work of war’s begun :  
    With these our victory must be won.”

---

“Glittering-throned, undying, Aphrodite,  
Wile-weaving daughter of high Zeus, I pray thee,  
Tame not my soul with heavy woe, dread mistress,  
    Nay, nor with anguish.

“But hither come if ever erst of old time  
Thou didst incline and listen to my crying,  
And from thy father’s palace thou descending  
    Camest with golden

“Chariot yoked, Thee fair swift-flying sparrows  
Over dark earth with multitudinous flapping,  
Pinion on pinion thorough the middle ether  
Down from heaven hurried.

“Quickly they came like light ; and thou, blest lady,  
Smiling with clear undying eyes, didst ask me,  
What was the woe that troubled me, and wherefore  
I had cried to thee.”

The Ionians invented the elegiac couplet, a modified form of the Homeric hexameter. This metre is said to have been first used for dirges sung to the flute. It can indeed bear an almost lyrical character, but sinks readily into a prosaic form suitable to sententious utterance, political or gnomic. Prose did not become a literary medium until the fifth century, and the sayings of the early philosophers and moralists were usually in elegiac verse.

The iambic metre, which is the nearest approach that poetry could make to common speech, is said to have been invented by **Archilochus** of Paros (about 700 B.C.). This metre was especially used for satire, of which Archilochus seems to have been a master. He led a wandering, dissatisfied life, despising wealth and ease, a slighted lover, an unsuccessful colonist, a soldier who scorned defeat but never profited by victory. Once he dropped his shield in flight. “What matter ?” he cries ; “I’ll get another just as good.” The fame of Archilochus in antiquity makes the loss of his main work a matter of deep regret.

Of the gnomic writers only a few can be mentioned. **Xenophanes** of Colophon (*fl.* c. 540 B.C.) criticised

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Homeric religion as giving an unworthy estimate of the gods. **Theognis** of Megara (c. 520), though an Aeolian, wrote in Ionic elegiacs a poem addressed to a young Megarian noble giving all kinds of precepts in the oligarchic interest, and deploring the growing strength of the popular party. **Solon** of Athens (639-559) vindicated in verse his own political reforms, by which he had hoped to relieve the distress of the poor and to avert a tyranny. From **Semonides** of Amorgos (*fl.* c. 625 B.C.) we have a satire in iambics on woman. The various types of women are drawn from animals: the vain woman from the horse, the inquisitive from the weasel, and finally the virtuous from the bee. Homeric chivalry has given way to an Oriental suspicion of woman and dislike of her influence. The tone of **Hipponax** of Ephesus (*fl.* c. 540) is equally peevish and misogynistic. He is the reputed inventor of the choliambic or lame iambic metre, an ugly form of verse used later in mimes and fables. One quotation will show his character.

“When is a wife her husband’s joy? But twice—  
The day she weds him and the day she dies.”

Of Ionian love-poets **Mimnermus** of Smyrna (*fl.* c. 630), and **Anacreon** of Teos (*fl.* c. 540) were the most notable. Mimnermus used the elegiac metre and became the model for the amatory elegies of Alexandria and Rome. Anacreon was a lyrist. Both are unromantic, selfish voluptuaries. Mimnermus soon wearies of life. He pities the sun for being obliged “all day long his course to run,” and prays for a painless death at sixty. Anacreon lived

at the court of Polycrates, prince of Samos, and with other tyrants, and enjoyed favour and ease till his death at the age of eighty-five. In him the degeneracy of the Ionian race, now unwarlike and fond only of wine and pleasure, found poetical expression. His verses, of which few survive, were much read and imitated in later antiquity.

Among the Dorians poetry had a definite place in public as well as in religious life. Choral singing was an important subject in the education of both sexes; the strains of the flute led the Spartan armies into battle, and their marching-songs were famous. It is not surprising that the Spartans, a nation of soldiers, should have borrowed most of their poets from other states. We first hear of **Terpander** of Lesbos (*fl.* c. 676 B.C.) who made some great improvement in stringed instruments, as well as in lyric metre. His compositions, which only free Spartans might sing, were typical of the stately, unadorned, archaic style. **Tyrtaeus** (*fl.* c. 640 B.C.) is said to have been a lame Athenian schoolmaster, sent to Sparta in obedience to an oracle. Sparta was at war with Messenia, and the royal house dreaded a revolution. Tyrtaeus wrote to defend the divine right of the Spartan kings and to exhort the citizens to repel the foe. His poetic eloquence won the day. These elegiac poems were written in a kind of Ionic dialect, but in his marching-songs he used the pure anapaestic metre and the Doric tongue.

**Alcman** (*fl.* c. 650), the chief lyrist of Sparta, shows us a more genial aspect of Dorian life. He was born at Sardis, and seems to have come to Sparta

as a slave some time in the seventh century. His chief works were the *Parthenia* or choral songs for the choirs of maidens who sang in honour of Artemis Orthia. These odes were mainly religious and mythological, but the poet turns aside now and then to describe the beauties of nature or to aim a little playful banter at members of the chorus.

**Arion**, a Lesbian poet of the late seventh century, lived mainly at the court of Periander, tyrant of Corinth. He wandered in the west, and, says the legend, was saved by a dolphin, when thrown overboard by sailors covetous of his wealth. Arion's achievement was the invention of the dithyramb, a wild choral song with dancing in honour of Dionysus. From this form tragedy ultimately sprang. **Stesichorus** of Himera in Sicily (*fl.* c. 600 B.C.) made further progress in the adaptation of epic themes to choral lyric. His fame was such that the coins of Minerva were afterwards stamped with his likeness. In the use of myth he made bold to change the traditional version: thus Helen, he declared, never went to Troy, but the gods sent a phantom instead.

With **Simonides** of Ceos (556–467 B.C.) Greek poetry ceases to be local and dialectic and assumes a national character. The Persian wars had roused the Greeks to common action in defence of their country; and the patriotic verse of Simonides was a lasting memorial of their victory and of their mighty dead. Most famous is his epitaph on the heroes of Thermopylae:

“Go tell the Spartans, thou that passest by,  
That here, obedient to their laws, we lie.”

Simonides seems to have been the first to give literary form to the epigram, which meant originally an inscription on a grave, statue, or votive offering. He, like others, used the elegiac metre for this purpose. But his many-sided genius showed itself further in all kinds of lyrical forms, among which his dithyrambs, dirges, and odes of victory were pre-eminent. In dirges, which were sung at funerals to the music of the flute, he showed rare pathos. This is exemplified in the fragment giving the lament of Danae in the carven ark beside her sleeping babe Perseus. The odes of victory or Epinicia were performed in honour of victories at athletic contests, the poet being specially employed to glorify the victor and his city. Athletics had been the accompaniment of funeral feasts since Homeric times, and were, it appears, regularly held at the graves of certain heroes. Four of these local meetings, the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games, rose to national importance, and drew competitors from the whole Greek world. To win a victory at such games was the highest ambition of young Greek aristocrats. The tyrants increased their fame and popularity by entering for the more expensive events, notably the chariot race; and they were the poets' best patrons in ordering Epinician odes and providing the chorus for their production. The greatest master of this style was **Pindar** (522-442 B.C.). He was born near Thebes, and is said to have studied poetry under the local poetess Corinna as well as at Athens. He travelled widely, and was a friend and guest of the great Sicilian and Cyrenian princes.

He wrote odes to order for religious purposes and in honour of athletic victories. Of the former we have only some long fragments of his *Paeans* (inaugural hymns to Apollo), but the latter, the Epini-cian odes, have survived. Pindar's great skill lies in the lyrical treatment of legend. He never wearies us with the details of the victories, but loves to relate the victor to the mythical glories of his house or city. Avoiding the straightforward detail of epic narration, he can express by a few touches the essentials of a situation and the ethos of the characters involved in it. Pindar writes as an aristocrat for aristocrats. He is orthodox in belief, refusing to admit any story discreditable to the gods. Politically a Conservative, he has certain definite ideals of good government and moderation, which he loses no opportunity of impressing upon his regal patrons. Though keenly alive to the beauty and radiance of life, he never forgets the vanity of human ambition and the imminence of doom. But more than other Greek poets he had visions of a future life and of the Islands of the Blest, the home of righteous souls.

Pindar's diction is lofty, intricate, and richly coloured. Metaphors or catchwords echo through his poems, suggesting vistas of allusions and hidden meanings. He has a rare sense of landscape beauty and a passion for light and brilliance, typifying success, joy, and immortal fame. The aesthetic effect of his odes, with their carefully balanced stanzas, and still more carefully planned irregular correspondence of metre and sense, can never, in the absence of the music, be fully appreciated. But those

who have patience to read and know him can travel back in imagination to the green banks of the Alpheus with their shining temples and white tiers of marble seats, where the victor, in the flower of youth and beauty, is received with a nation's applause and immortalised by the poet's song, the "warbled notes of boys," in an age when the world was young, and the Olympian olive-wreath the highest prize that life could offer.

**Bacchylides** was a nephew of Simonides, and flourished about 468 B.C. Like Pindar, he wrote odes of victory, and was patronised by tyrants. Until 1897 he was a mere name to us ; but then a number of his odes came to light from an Egyptian papyrus. Bacchylides and Pindar were jealous rivals, and although the inferiority of the former is unquestioned, he may have been more popular owing to his greater simplicity and easy grace of style. Like Pindar he uses mythology freely in his Epinicia. We have also some of his dithyrambs, now no longer confined to Dionysus-worship, but resembling a religious operetta with musical dialogue between the choruses.

By the middle of the fifth century the glories of Greek lyric poetry are at an end. Tragedy becomes the prevailing form, and absorbs for its choral odes most of the lyric genius of the age.

One later poet, **Timotheus** of Miletus (447-357), gave further scope to the dithyramb, to which he assimilated the *nome*, the ancient lyric song of Terpander. An example of a *nome* found in an Egyptian papyrus is the *Persae*, a cantata on the battle of Salamis. Timotheus was a favourite at Athens, and



writes in a modified Attic dialect. The Spartans, however, expelled him because they disapproved of his innovations in music. What these were is uncertain. He is said to have added an eleventh string to the cithara, and possibly his rich orchestration spoilt the understanding of the words. Timotheus writes in a bombastic style, full of novel compound words ; his high-flown rhetoric alternates with tragicomic bathos.

SAPPHO—Wharton, *Sappho* (trans., &c.) PINDAR—trans., Myers. BACCHYLIDES—Trans., Poste. (See also Histories of Greek Literature given on p. vi.)

## CHAPTER III

### TRAGEDY

TRAGEDY seems to owe its origin to choral lays, sung at festivals of Dionysus. The name is uncertain in its meaning. It was applied to the dithyrambs of Arion and Bacchylides, where choral songs were sometimes interspersed with a kind of dialogue between the leader and the chorus on the mythical subject of the hymn. To Athens belongs the honour of giving a dramatic form to this lyrical ode.

Thespis (sixth century B.C.) introduced an actor who answered the leader of the chorus. Their dialogue was partly in iambic metre, which represented ordinary speech. The actor could change his dress in a booth called σκηνή (hence our *scene*).

In 535 B.C. public tragic competitions were established at Athens under Pisistratus. Any poet could

submit a tragedy to the Archon. The three best plays or sets of plays competed at the festival. The chorus were paid and equipped by some wealthy citizen nominated by the Archon. The poet was responsible for the music as well as the text, and had to train the chorus and actors, usually taking a part himself. The accompaniment was played on the cithara and double flute. The chorus wore costumes appropriate to the play, and went through the motions of a stately dance. The winning chorus sometimes put up a monument to its victory.

Of Thespis and his successors little remains. They are known to have taken plots from all kinds of mythology.

**Phrynichus** (fl. 511–476 B.C.) attempted to use historical subjects, perhaps under the patriotic influence of Themistocles. His play, the *Capture of Miletus* is said to have moved the Athenians to tears; but they afterwards fined the poet for reminding them of their misfortunes.

**Aeschylus** (fl. 499–456 B.C.) fought in the Persian wars and wrote, it is said, ninety plays. He usually exhibited a set of three tragedies, called a trilogy, followed by a satyr-drama. His great improvement was the addition of a second actor, so that the essential incidents in a drama could be represented on the stage. His tragedies tend to become less choral and more dramatic. Thus in the *Suppliants* more than half the play consists of choral odes, and the second actor is hardly needed; while in the fourth extant play, the *Prometheus*, the crisis is enacted before our eyes, and the later plays need a third actor. Aeschylus

is said to have invented a regular tragic costume, including thick-soled buskins and appropriate masks. The stage arrangements were very simple. Probably the actors used the back of the semicircular orchestra. Behind them was a stage-building with three entrances. It was hung with some kind of painted scenery, usually the front of a temple or palace. A complete change of scene was very rare. There was a device called *Eccyclema*, a kind of turntable by which any actor or object could be brought forward from behind the scenes. An actor could appear at an upper window, or a god could be swung forward by a crane and take his stand on a high ledge. Probably most of these devices were later than Aeschylus. The imagination of the audience could remedy the deficiencies of the staging. It is remarkable that the use of a raised stage above the orchestra was probably unknown until the third or fourth century B.C.

✓ Aeschylus was a deep religious thinker, and his tragedies are full of great problems that were beginning to force themselves on men's minds : the power of Destiny, the seeming injustice of the gods, both in legend and in providence, the inheritance of doom, and the suffering of the innocent. ✓ In the *Persae* the great patriotic drama of Greece, the defeat of Xerxes is indeed easily explained as the punishment of impiety and presumption. But what of Prometheus, the benefactor of mankind, tormented by Zeus for his generous acts ? What of Orestes, who in obedience to Apollo's bidding to avenge his father's death, has slain his mother, and the Furies are out for his blood ?

Aeschylus answers thus. Necessity rules ; Zeus is supreme because he wills what Necessity directs. He is also just. Pride and sin never go unpunished ; if the sinner escapes, the curse hangs over his house. But the guiltless do not suffer ; the curse slumbers until a fresh misdeed calls down the wrath of heaven. Prometheus is punished for a time, but is at last liberated and glorified. In Aeschylus' fourth play, the *Seven against Thebes*, Eteocles is king and is threatened by an invasion under Polynices, his exiled brother. Both are under their father's curse. Yet Aeschylus makes us feel that Eteocles by prudence can save his city and himself. It is because, in impious rage against his brother, he rushes to fight him hand to hand, that he falls and brings final ruin on his house. The crowning work of Aeschylus is the trilogy, *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi* (Libation-bearers), and *Eumenides*. Agamemnon, returning victorious from Troy, is murdered by his queen Clytaemnestra. For a time she reigned with her paramour Aegisthus. Then Orestes comes home and avenges his father. Pursued by the Furies for matricide, he flies to Delphi, where Apollo bids him stand his trial at Athens. Athena herself calls the Council of Mars' Hill, the Areopagus. Orestes is finally acquitted, and the Furies are appeased by the founding of their worship at Athens. Here we see an important aspect of Greek tragedy in showing the people the origin of their own cults. Aeschylus believed in the old religion and had studied it deeply. His aim is to show its noblest side, to overawe the worldly minded, and to satisfy the doubter.

Of all dramatists Aeschylus is the greatest master of the grand style. His characters are like archaic statues, rugged and superhuman. His verse is massive, full of big, sonorous words. None can depict like him the splendour of war, the din of battle, the lone majesty of mountains, and, above all, the might of elemental forces, the rock-hurling Titans, and the thunders of Zeus.

Sophocles (497–405 B.C.) was born at Colonus near Athens. As a boy he was chosen to lead the choir that sang the triumphal song after the battle of Salamis. At the age of twenty-eight he defeated Aeschylus in the tragic contest, and during the next sixty years he wrote more than a hundred tragedies and won more first prizes than any other tragedian. He was popular at Athens, held several public offices, and never settled away from home. Seven tragedies are extant, of which the *Ajax* is probably the earliest. Ajax has competed with Odysseus for the arms of Achilles, towards the end of the Trojan war, and having lost the award resolved to slay the Greek generals. But maddened by Athena he falls upon their cattle instead. Now he is himself again, and overcome by shame determines to die. After a pathetic farewell to his infant son he escapes to the shore and falls upon his sword. The rest of the play is concerned with the question of Ajax' burial, which was necessary to secure his immortality as a hero. Finally Agamemnon, as general, allows it. In the *Antigone* (c. 440 B.C.) we have the sequel to Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. Creon, the new king, has buried with honour Eteocles, the defender of his

country, but ordered Polynices to be left to the birds and dogs. Antigone chooses to obey God rather than man, and in defiance of the edict performs the rite of burial for her brother. She is arrested, brought before Creon, and sentenced to death. Creon's son Haemon, her betrothed, pleads in vain for her life. Then Teiresias, the blind seer, declares to Creon that heaven is about to punish his impiety. Creon, now thoroughly alarmed, sets out to release Antigone; but he comes too late. Antigone has hanged herself in her living tomb and Haemon, at the sight of his father, stabs himself in despair. When Creon returns to the palace he finds that Eurydice, the queen, hearing of Haemon's death, has taken her own life. In this play Sophocles raises the vexed question of the conflict of duties, the claims of conscience and claims of the state. Creon is evidently in the wrong: he breaks a universal law of Greece in refusing burial to a foe. But it is excess of patriotism that misleads him, and his fate is a climax of tragic horror. Antigone is a pattern heroine. Dauntless, pious, faithful to the last, she seems to modern readers to lack womanliness. In all her laments over the fall of her house, she can only spare one line for her lover. We admire her virtue but she does not win our hearts. The *Electra* dramatises an episode already used by Aeschylus. Sophocles reverts to the Homeric view of the vengeance of Orestes. Aegisthus, his father's murderer, is a proper victim of retribution, and the punishment of the faithless wife and unnatural mother appears as a secondary act of justice. The interest centres in Electra herself, who through

years of ill-usage had refused to truckle to the usurper, and is now a relentless abettor of her mother's doom. The recognition-scene between Electra and her brother, whom she has not seen since babyhood, is particularly telling. The *Oedipus Rex* was Aristotle's ideal tragedy. It contains an earlier phase of the myth used in the *Seven against Thebes* and *Antigone*. Oedipus has solved the riddle of the Sphinx and saved Thebes from her attacks. For this service he is chosen king in the room of Laius, who has been murdered on the road to Delphi. Jocasta, the widowed queen, marries Oedipus. They live in peace for some years. Then a plague smites the land, and Apollo bids the slayer of Laius to be tracked down and punished. Oedipus takes up the case with all his energy, and step by step discovers the truth, that he has fallen into the very doom of which Apollo warned him, that he is himself the son and the murderer of Laius and the paramour of his own mother. This revelation, in which proof after proof is hurled at the luckless king, is the most effective in all literature. Jocasta hangs herself, and Oedipus, who can no longer bear the light of day, puts out his eyes, and is finally allowed to go into exile.

In old age Sophocles completed the story in his *Oedipus at Colonus*. The hero with his two daughters has taken refuge in Attica, the mythical protectress of the outcast. Good king Theseus grants him shelter, and in the peaceful grove, near the poet's own home, he finds his last resting-place. Creon comes with threats to demand his surrender, and Polynices, his thankless son, now in exile, is con-

demned by his father's curse. But the serenity of the age-worn sufferer is untouched, and his end is a beatific translation to a better world. Cicero says that Sophocles was brought into court by one of his sons, who sought an interdict against him as incompetent to manage his estate; and that the poet read aloud from his unpublished play the beautiful chorus describing Colonus; whereupon the jury, their patriotism and admiration touched, at once dismissed the case.

The *Trachiniae* deals with the death of Heracles, caused by the robe poisoned in the blood of the centaur Nessus. Deianira, to regain the love of Heracles, uses this as a charm. Heracles is tortured by the poison and dies on a pyre. The character of Deianira is full of pathos. Her joyful expectation of her lord's homecoming, her dismay at his infidelity, her forbearance towards a young rival whom she pities, and finally her silent resolution to die on the receipt of the fatal news, are presented with true humanity. In the *Philoctetes* Sophocles used a theme from the Trojan war that had already been used by Aeschylus and by Euripides. Philoctetes had been bitten by a snake and was marooned on the island Lemnos when the great expedition sailed on to Troy. Nevertheless this lonely wretch with a festering wound in his foot has the only weapon that can take the city, the bow and arrows of Heracles. In Sophocles' play Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrive from Troy to fetch the hero. Philoctetes receives the younger man rapturously, and pours out an unspeakably touching account of his woes.



Neoptolemus has been primed by Odysseus to outwit Philoctetes and steal the bow. He does this, but his nobler nature quickly asserts itself and he gives back the weapon. Philoctetes now flatly refuses to help the Greeks, and the matter is only settled by the miraculous appearance of Heracles, who bids Philoctetes be of good cheer and set sail for Troy. This device of the *deus ex machina* was abused by Euripides, but is magnificently effective in the present instance.

Sophocles improved the drama by the addition of a third actor. This made possible more complicated action and a finer play of character. The chorus, whose number he raised to fifteen, becomes less important than with Aeschylus.

In the technique of tragedy Sophocles holds the highest place. His plots unfold with sheer inevitability. His character-drawing is vivid and consistent; he is a master of eloquence, alike in pleading, in narration, and in wrath. His dialogue is full of subtle balance and retort; his lyrics have not the grandeur of Aeschylus but they glow with a mellow radiance of poetic fire. Tragic irony, in which the speaker uses words of whose hidden meaning he is unaware while the audience marks it, is an effective device in the hands of Sophocles. He is the most Attic of the tragedians—if not the greatest, yet certainly the most perfect.

**Euripides** (485–407/6 B.C.), the third of the great Attic tragedians, was born at Salamis, became a disciple of the philosopher Anaxagoras, and a friend of Socrates and the Sicilian rhetorician Protagoras.

He is said to have written ninety-two plays, but only gained the first prize five times. Of a retiring nature, he lived much alone at Salamis, where Aristophanes jestingly shows him surrounded with his books and tragic properties. Euripides' last years were spent at the court of Archelaus in Macedonia.

Euripides, though less admired in his own day, has been the most popular Attic dramatist in later antiquity and modern times. This is due, firstly, to the pathos of some of his scenes, next to the simple beauty of his lyrics, and thirdly to his critical attitude towards the facts of life. A reader would not be struck by the weakness of plot, the frigidity in the speeches, and frequent lack of tragic dignity which must have displeased the Athenian theatrical public.

The chorus is now felt as a hindrance to the action, partly because the myths suited to choric treatment had been exhausted. In Euripides it is a spectator of the drama uttering platitudes and singing more or less irrelevant odes. Sometimes it leaves the stage altogether. To obviate misunderstanding of the legend, which Euripides often altered to suit his purpose, he uses a prologue in the modern sense, practically addressed to the spectators. The appearance of a god on the stage was a frequent device in all tragedy. But while in Aeschylus the whole atmosphere is so unearthly that this causes no astonishment, Euripides resorts to it to clear up an otherwise hopeless situation, or at best to give a kind of epilogue detailing the destinies of the characters. For example, in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* Orestes has come, in obedience to Apollo, to rescue his sister from the

clutches of Thoas, in whose land strangers are sacrificed, and to carry off the image of Artemis. After a touching recognition, Iphigenia plans their escape by desperate cunning. After a fierce fight with some of Thoas' followers they take ship, only to be driven back by a contrary wind, and left at the mercy of Thoas. Suddenly Athena appears and orders Thoas to let the fugitives sail with the image. He obeys and all ends happily. It will be seen that up to the final stroke the gods have taken no part in the action. Apollo, whose oracle suggested the venture, gives no help whatever. The human characters are left altogether to their own resources, and a certain and tragic failure stares them in the face. Exactly similar conclusions recur in many plays. What did Euripides mean? Does he believe that the gods do intervene, however late, or that their help is an incredible addition to the real inhumanity of the early legends? The latter view finds favour to-day. Euripides often shows the gods, especially Apollo, in an odious light, yet he protests that the gods can do no evil. Hence it is thought that Euripides had learnt a more philosophical religion from Anaxagoras and other thinkers, and while outwardly following the legends, wishes to bring home to the intelligent part of his audience the folly and barbarism of primitive beliefs.

The diction of Euripides is less elevated than that of the other dramatists. His dialogue approaches the simplicity of every-day life. Often in his set speeches he makes free use of rhetoric. In lyrics he sometimes gives us a symphony of beautiful sounds,

with repeated words or groups of synonyms without very much regard to the sense.

Seventeen of his plays are extant. The *Cyclops* is the one surviving satyr-drama. It deals with the adventure of Odysseus in the Cyclops' cave in a spirit of conventional buffoonery. With some exceptions the earlier plays are more cheerful in tone than the later; and it has been thought that Euripides, inspired by Pericles' ideals, wished to glorify Athens, while his disappointment in their failure and disgust at the excesses of the democracy may have saddened the last part of his life.

Much attention has lately been paid to Euripides' attitude to women. It used to be said that he was a misogynist, but the fact seems to be that he tries to show women with their real good and bad qualities instead of conventional virtues invented for them by men.

In the *Medea* Jason has won the Golden Fleece and brought Medea home as his bride. He then tires of her and for political reasons weds Glauce. He attempts to justify his conduct on the plea that Medea is really better off in Greece than in a barbarian land. Medea in a passion of jealousy resolves on the only possible vengeance, the murder of their two children. She commits this crime and escapes, leaving Jason in despair. Medea's account of the grievances of her sex exceeds the demands of the situation; but we must remember that women were present at tragic performances. The genius of Euripides forces us to sympathise with the wife and mother, witch and murderess though she be, rather

than the respectable Jason, who has done nothing against conventional Greek morality, but is none the less depicted as a quibbler and a coward. Against this must be set the many virtuous heroines in Euripides: Alcestis, for example, dies without a murmur to save Admetus, her amiable but mean-spirited husband. When she is restored by the intervention of Heracles, we can only feel that Admetus is worthily deprived even of the dignity of suffering.

Even where Euripides shows the commoner failings of women, he does so with a certain sympathy. Electra has been called a typical old maid. In the other dramatists she is a tragic heroine, rebellious in bondage and dignified under oppression; in Euripides' *Electra* she is banished from court, wedded to an old peasant, and burdened with tasks that make her weary and querulous. The vengeance of Orestes on Aegisthus is shown as a sordid crime. Electra sends for Clytemnestra, who arrives in state, but sad at heart, not knowing of her paramour's death. We see the pathos of her sin and splendour. For a moment she pities Electra, who answers ironically and invites her into the cottage where she lives. There Orestes slays his mother. After the deed both brother and sister are plunged in remorse. The Dioscuri order Orestes to go wandering, and Electra to marry his friend Pylades; and we can hardly determine which of the murderers has the heavier punishment. It is worth noting that the wickedness of the chief characters is contrasted with the almost tiresome virtue of Electra's nominal husband, the

old peasant. Euripides fully believed that moral goodness was independent of rank.

The final achievement of Euripides' life was the *Bacchæ*. In earlier plays he had criticised the traditional religion, but now he seems to return to orthodoxy. The subject of the play is the introduction of Bacchic worship at Thebes, and the fate of Pentheus, who attempted to thwart its spread. The whole population, including even Teiresias, and the aged king Cadmus, is given up to this orgiastic cult. Pentheus imprisons Bacchus, and forbids the rites. The god escapes and lures Pentheus to disguise himself and spy on the Bacchanals, who are out on Mount Cithaeron. Pentheus is quickly detected, and is torn to pieces by his mother Agave and the other Maenads, who in their frenzy think he is a young lion. In the ravings of Agave, and the ecstatic hymns of the chorus, are some of the most inspired passages of Euripides.

**ÆSCHYLUS**—Trans., verse: Campbell; Morshead.  
**SOPHOCLES**—Trans., verse: Campbell; some plays by Murray; Phillimore. Prose: Jebb. **EURIPIDES**—Verse: Murray (some plays); Way. General: Haigh, *Attic Theatre* and *Tragic Drama of the Greeks*; Verrall, *Euripides the Rationalist*, *Four Plays of Euripides*, *Bacchants of Euripides*, and other *Essays*.

## CHAPTER IV

## COMEDY

GREEK comedy seems to have originated in rude performances given at rustic festivals. Aristotle says that it was taken from the Dorians. There is evidence for such acting at Sparta, where grotesque clay masks have been discovered, and also at Megara and in Sicily. It is supposed that strolling players crossed into Attica and introduced comedy. For a long time it had no official recognition, but was produced by subscription at Dionysian festivals.

Cratinus (520–422 B.C.) was the founder of political comedy, his forerunners having written merely for fun. Of him and other early comedians little remains. We only know that they were free in attacking political opponents and were more or less successful rivals of Aristophanes.

Aristophanes (*fl.* 427–388 B.C.) was the greatest master of the Old Comedy. His earliest plays are mainly taken up with politics and support the Conservative party. He attacks Cleon and other demagogues, and deplores the Peloponnesian war. The *Acharnians* (425), *Knights* (424), *Peace* (421) are mainly political. In the *Clouds* he ridicules the new sophistic learning, of which Socrates is unfairly taken as a representative. The *Wasps* (423) satirises the litigious character of the Athenians. The *Birds* (414) is a brilliant absurdity describing a city built in mid-air by the birds, on the advice of two discontented Athenians. It is probably a satire on the

wild ambitions of Athens. In the *Lysistrata* (411) the women of Greece are supposed to plot a universal strike, which stops the Peloponnesian war. Two plays, *Thesmophoriazusae* (410) and *Frogs* (405), are mainly aimed at Euripides, of whom orthodox Athenians disapproved. In the *Ecclesiazusae* (393) the poet ridicules current notions of socialism and the rights of women. The latter form a parliament which founds a communistic state. In the *Plutus* the unjust distribution of wealth is discussed. Plutus, god of wealth, regains his sight, whereby the good are enriched and injustice ceases.

The Old Comedy can scarcely be said to have a plot. There is a comic situation more or less fantastic; and the question at issue is usually debated in set speeches. After the decision, various irrelevant episodes are introduced. The chorus sings odes between the acts, which are either satirical or imitations of hymns or festal songs. An important feature was the *parabasis*, where the chorus faced the audience, and addressed them in the name of the poet. Thus Attic comedy was a kind of pantomime, not devoid of serious purpose, full of reference to current events, but using all means, from the finest satire to the most vulgar buffoonery, to raise a laugh.

The style of Aristophanes is remarkably vigorous; in comic ribaldry he is only to be compared with Shakespeare. His wit is ever fresh and boisterous, but he can write lyrics showing high poetic feeling and a true love of nature.

To the Old Comedy succeeded the Middle Comedy;



but there was of course no sharp division. Aristophanes' last play, the *Plutus*, already shows most of the features of the later species. Political and individual satire is seldom found: the playwright is more concerned with types of character; and slaves, cooks, and other low-class fellows supply the comic element. Women play prominent parts; two appear in the *Plutus*; and in a fragment of Epicrates, Lais in advancing years is compared to an old eagle, no longer able to secure her prey. The chorus only sings one short irrelevant ode in *Plutus*. Otherwise the leader only takes part in the dialogue. In Middle and New Comedy the chorus had a purely formal connection with the play, and gave a performance of singing and dancing between the acts.

The masters of the Middle Comedy are mere names to us. Antiphanes (404–328) is said to have written 230 comedies. Alexis of Thurii (c. 390–288) ridiculed the Platonists. Timocles attacked Demosthenes. It appears that much variety of subject, whether mythological, social, political, or philosophical, was still allowed. Many of the plays were probably meant for reading rather than for the stage.

New Comedy differs in no essential from Middle Comedy, but the process of evolution is now complete. The genius of **Menander** gave classical drama its final shape, and made it the prototype for the Roman, mediæval and modern theatre. We have no means of telling how much credit is due to Menander himself for such a momentous innovation, and how much was the result of the spirit of his age. But the fact remains, that there is no play, either

tragic or comic (apart from opera and pantomime) but owes its form (by direct historical descent) to the Attic New Comedy. Menander did for comedy what Euripides did for tragedy, and Socrates for philosophy. He proved that "the proper study of mankind is man." But while Euripides left no worthy successor and so far killed ancient tragedy, Menander founded a tradition that is still alive and fruitful.

He lived at Athens 342-291 B.C., was a student of Theophrastus, a friend of Epicurus, and a lover of the renowned beauty, Glycera. He wrote 108 plays. Apart from numerous quotations, we have now large fragments of six plays, and can fairly judge of Menander's style and methods. His plots are taken from every-day life, and are concerned with love, quarrels, and recognitions. Certain stock characters, the heavy father, scapegrace son, designing mistress, ingenious slave, braggart soldier, make their appearance. The diction is simple, and usually free from rhetoric. Menander excels as a psychologist. His figures are not only of universal interest as types, but possess that individuality which makes them dramatically alive, and wins the sympathy of the reader.

A few of his pithy sayings deserve quotation.

"No god goes about with money in his pocket, but when propitious he provides means and shows opportunities : if you miss these don't beg of the gods, but fight your own idle disposition." "We live not as we like, but as we can." "Being a man ask not the gods for freedom from vexation, but rather for patience. If you want to escape care, you must be a god

or a corpse. But longsuffering is a cure for evil.” “In all men you’ll find much to put up with : but if the good outweighs the ill, then give credit accordingly.” “A man in misfortune is naturally confiding : for being always disappointed in his own calculations, he thinks his neighbour wiser than himself.” “The only chance for idle words is to make them short and suited to the occasion.” “Length of days is vexation of spirit. O grievous age, thou hast nought of good, but much trouble and annoyance for men. Yet we all desire and pray to attain unto thee.” “Surely love is the greatest of the gods and far the most to be honoured. For there is no man so stingy and exact in his ways, but has spent a part of his belongings on this god. Those with whom love deals lightly he compels to do this in their youth, but those that postpone the reckoning till old age are forced to pay with interest on arrears.”

ARISTOPHANES—Trans., verse : Frere (some plays). Text and verse trans. : Rogers. MENANDER—Greek text and prose trans. by “Unus multorum.”

## CHAPTER V

### EARLY GREEK PROSE : HERODOTUS, THUCYDIDES

UNTIL the sixth century the use of prose was confined to documents, treaties, inventories, official records, legal codes, and the ordinary affairs of life. It was the rise of Ionian philosophy and history that created the need for a literary vehicle of scientific expression.

The critical spirit of Ionia began at this epoch to revolt against the traditional theology and cosmogony of the poets, and against the Orphic religion, which threatened to dominate Greece by a system of mystery and initiation. The Ionians sought for a rational explanation of nature. **Thales** of Miletus, the father of European philosophy and science, conceived of water as the principle of being. He was so eminent an astronomer that he foretold the solar eclipse of 585 B.C. **Xenophanes**, whose poetry has already been mentioned, was a rationalistic thinker and an enemy of Orphic mysticism: he asserted that God is One and not like mortals. **Heracleitus** of Ephesus (c. 500 B.C.) held the doctrine of flux: "all things are in motion." He wrote in a prose style peculiar to himself, terse and obscure. **Parmenides**, who went back to verse to express his doctrines, asserted the reality of Being, and cast doubt upon the sense-data. The teaching of these sages helped to win a great victory for freedom of thought, and averted the danger of a narrow religious domination. Little remains of the writings of the early philosophers. **Anaxagoras**, the friend of Pericles and Euripides (c. 440 B.C.), asserted the supremacy of Mind. **Democritus** was the founder of the atomic theory. Both these thinkers were famous for their literary style, but the details of their systems belong to the history of philosophy.

History begins in the writings of the *logographers*, who wrote down the ancient legends in prose, and to some extent co-ordinated them and related them to family history or local tradition. The greatest of

the logographers was **Hecataeus** of Miletus (c. 500 B.C.). He was a traveller and geographer, and became the political adviser of the Ionians during their revolt against Persia. His book of travels was freely used by Herodotus. **Hellanicus** of Lesbos wrote a history of Attica from the earliest times to his own day (c. 430 B.C.).

**Herodotus** of Halicarnassus, the Father of History, was born about 485 B.C. Political troubles and the desire to see the world sent him on his travels, and he visited Asia Minor, Babylon, and Egypt. He lived for some time at Athens, and joined the Athenian colony to Thurii in Italy (443 B.C.), which country he also came to know well. The subject of his work is the Persian wars, regarded as an episode in the age-long struggle between East and West. Herodotus knew the Attic tragedians well, and has an Aeschylean belief in Nemesis. The gods hate excessive prosperity. The fate of the great invasion appears as a direct retribution for the pride and impiety of Xerxes. The hero in the tragedy is the Athenian democracy. It is not surprising that the people of Athens favoured and rewarded Herodotus. But beyond everything Herodotus is a story-teller. He does not seek facts for their political significance, but for their picturesqueness and dramatic interest. In narrative power he is a true heir of epic tradition. Speeches, almost Homeric in style, adorn his work. His dialect is a literary Ionic, which he writes in an easy, flowing manner, not without some new rhetorical devices. The Alexandrines divided his history into nine books, named after the Muses. He first sets

before us the rise of the Persian empire and the fate of the kingdoms on whose ruin it was built. In Book ii. the Persian invasion of Egypt is the occasion for a detailed description of the religion, customs, and natural features of the country. Herodotus was an eager but very uncritical inquirer, and all kinds of curious tales were foisted on him during his wanderings. He certainly did not believe all he heard; but he relates a good story, whenever he finds one, without vouching for strict accuracy. The third and fourth books deal with the consolidation of the Persian empire by Darius, and his invasion of Scythia; Books v.-ix. deal with the Ionic revolt and the Persian wars, including frequent digressions on the early conflicts of the Greek states. The capture of Sestos by the Athenians in 478 B.C. is the final event in his history. In writing of military and political matters Herodotus suffered from lack of expert knowledge. He was inexperienced in war, and had no informants in touch with the strategic movements of the time. In respect of numbers he is quite untrustworthy, and he lacked the critical power to disentangle the truth from the tissue of error and prejudice that his sources presented. Nor is he free from superstition, and a belief in oracles natural to a religious man in that age. On the other hand, he is fair-minded, and honestly desires to speak the truth. His love of Athens does not blind him to the merits of the other Greeks or of the barbarians. The Persian wars were an event of world-wide importance, and we owe our knowledge of them almost wholly to Herodotus. Besides that, he has given

mankind one of the most delightful story-books in existence.

Although few years separate Herodotus from Thucydides, the two authors are totally different in style, method, and outlook upon life. Thucydides was an Athenian, and his genius was influenced by the new sophistic learning which flourished at Athens in the later fifth century. Democracy had invaded every side of public life. Success in politics depended largely on the power of swaying the assembly by eloquence. In law all important cases came before large juries highly susceptible to persuasive speech. Any citizen might find himself at the mercy of an informer if he could not defend himself in open court. Hence the art of rhetoric, first cultivated in Sicily, gained an immediate footing at Athens, and the cleverest young men of the day thronged to hear its professors. But the science of words alone could not satisfy the eager learners: geometry, astronomy, dialectic, geography, and political science were all included in the new Higher Learning. Many of the teachers, called **Sophists**, were foreigners settled at Athens, and their curriculum shocked the more conservative sort, who believed that the old poets, with a smattering of music and plenty of athletics, were the safest subjects of education.

**Protagoras** of Abdera (c. 450 B.C.), known to us from Plato, was a man of versatile ability. He founded the science of grammar, and lectured on rhetoric and ethics. For his unorthodox views on religion he was prosecuted and fled from Athens. Among the other sophists **Gorgias** of Leontini in

Sicily (born c. 485 B.C.) was the most famous teacher of rhetoric. He came on an embassy to Athens in 427, and attracted such a following that he remained there, writing show speeches, *e.g.* funeral orations, and giving lessons. His prose is highly rhythmical, with a careful balance of clauses, and much antithesis. Though carried to excess by Gorgias and his followers, these devices become part of the regular style of Greek oratory.

The merits of the sophists were their ingenuity and variety of interests. Their chief fault was that they aimed at success rather than virtue. Their pupils were cultured men and astute politicians; they were not always good citizens.

Thucydides was born near Athens between 471 and 461 B.C. He came of a noble and wealthy family, and is said to have learned rhetoric from the orator Antiphon. During the early years of the Peloponnesian war he was at Athens. He took the plague in 430, but recovered. In 424 he was in command of a small fleet meant to protect the Athenian possessions in Thrace. But the active Brasides, the Spartan general, forestalled him by the occupation of Amphipolis. Thucydides was banished after this failure, and spent twenty years in exile. His plan of a history of the Peloponnesian war now took shape, and he visited the chief sites, watched the course of campaigns and political movements, and by associating with both sides, learned their motives and methods.

His history is in eight books, of which the first seven show signs of revision after the end of the war.



The eighth, giving events following the Athenian disaster in Sicily, never received the finishing touches.

The arrangement of his history is highly systematic. Book i. is introductory, dealing chiefly with the growth of the Athenian empire and the preliminaries of the war. Books ii., iii., and iv. contain the earlier campaigns, which are arranged chronologically by summers and winters. In Book v. come the events leading up to the Peace of Nicias in 421, and the complications before the Sicilian expedition. This latter is the subject of Books vi. and vii., and Book viii. contains the events subsequent to it down to 411 B.C. The few digressions are intended to give accurate details of some race, country, or episode. Outside the speeches the chief reflective passage is suggested by the cruelties of party strife at Corcyra.

“Every form of death was to be seen, and everything, and more than everything that commonly happens in revolutions, happened then. The father slew the son, and the suppliants were torn from the temples and slain near them ; some of them were even walled up in the temple of Dionysus and there perished. To such extremes of cruelty did revolution go ; and this seemed to be the worst of revolutions, because it was the first. . . .

“When troubles had once begun in the cities, those who followed carried the revolutionary spirit further and further, and determined to outdo the report of all who had preceded them by the ingenuity of their enterprises and the atrocity of their revenges. The meaning of the words had no longer the same re-

lation to things, but was changed by them as they thought proper. Reckless daring was held to be loyal courage; prudent delay was the excuse of a coward; moderation was the disguise of unmanly weakness; to know everything was to do nothing. Frantic energy was the true quality of a man. A conspirator who wanted to be safe was a recreant in disguise. The lover of violence was always trusted, and his opponent suspected. He who succeeded in a plot was deemed knowing, but a still greater master in craft was he who detected one. . . .

“Revenge was dearer than self-preservation. Any agreements sworn to by either party, when they could do nothing else, were binding as long as both were powerless. But he who on a favourable opportunity first took courage and struck at his enemy when he saw him off his guard, had greater pleasure in a perfidious than he would have had in an open act of revenge; he congratulated himself that he had taken the safer course, and also that he had overreached his enemy and gained the prize of superior ability.” (Trans., Jowett.)

Thucydides is the first scientific historian. His object is to show how human beings have acted and will act under certain given circumstances. Divine intervention plays no part in his scheme. It is with the ambitions, plans, fortunes of states and individuals that he is concerned. He refuses to embellish his work with legends or personalities. This conception of the dignity of history may have led him to ignore facts that, though trifling in themselves, influenced the course of events. As a seeker for truth and an

impartial narrator he is above reproach. He claims to state nothing on mere hearsay, but to have ascertained from all available sources the exact truth in every case. But his scientific spirit has not destroyed his humanity. The Peloponnesian war is a tragedy, and Thucydides' own country is the victim. Her sufferings in the plague and during the fatal Sicilian expedition are brought home to us with a pathos intensified by reticence. Thucydides may have felt that a kind of Nemesis had overtaken Athens for her ambition and cruelty. But this is due to no divine vengeance, but to the innate blindness and infatuation of human nature. Everywhere he sees man growing insolent in prosperity, reckless and treacherous in party strife, and ruthless in the hour of victory. It is the wise man, who knows human frailty and the transience of prosperity and is forearmed by prudence against reverse, that Thucydides most admires. For Pericles, the trusted leader of imperial Athens, he has a genuine respect. The funeral oration assigned to him by Thucydides is a splendid monument of the glory of Athens.

A few phrases may be quoted here :

"I have dwelt upon the greatness of Athens because I want to show you that we are contending for a higher prize than those who enjoy none of these privileges, and to establish by manifest proof the merit of these men whom I am now commemorating. Their loftiest praise has been already spoken. For in magnifying the city I have magnified them, whose virtues made her glorious. . . .

"Any one can discourse to you for ever about the

advantages of a brave defence which you know already. But instead of listening to him I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her ; and when you are impressed by the spectacle of her glory, reflect that this empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it, who in the hour of conflict had the fear of dishonour always present to them, and who, if ever they failed in an enterprise, would not allow their virtues to be lost to their country, but freely gave their lives to her as the fairest offering which they could present at her feast. The sacrifice which they collectively made was individually repaid to them ; for they received again each one for himself a praise which grows not old, and the noblest of all sepulchres—I speak not of that in which their remains are laid, but of that in which her glory survives, and is proclaimed always and on all fitting occasions both in word and deed. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men ; not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions in their own country, but in foreign lands there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men.” (Trans., Jowett.)

The speeches which fill a large place in Thucydides’ history do not profess to be reports of what was actually delivered, nor are they, on the other hand, mere rhetorical exhibitions. The object of the speeches is to sum up a situation and to bring out the principles involved. Here Thucydides shows his rhetorical training ; his speeches are full of anti-

thesis, complicated in grammatical structure, and condensed in reasoning. Most ancient critics condemn their obscurity.

A favourite device of Thucydides was to give the speeches made on both sides of a question, or by opposing leaders before a battle. Among these the rival arguments of Cleon and Diodotus on the punishment of the revolted Mytileneans may be taken as typical. Cleon maintained that might is right, that subject states can only be held by fear, and he rallies the assembly on its fickleness and craving for novelty. Thucydides disliked Cleon, but deftly uses him to point out the weakness of the Athenian democracy. The reply of Diodotus is a careful essay on the theory of punishment. Human nature, he says, can never be restrained by fear as long as hope suggests the possibility of impunity. Therefore to terrify the allies would only nerve them to more desperate resistance. The true course is to remove the temptation to revolt, to dissemble even well-grounded suspicion, and if an offender has to be punished, to do this in such a moderate way as to secure a useful subject for the future. It is scarcely credible that such cool logic can really have been used before the excitable Athenian assembly when it was a question of life or death for the whole population of Mytilene. In the debate on the fate of the island of Melos Thucydides marshals his arguments in dialogue form. The Athenians ruthlessly assert the doctrine of Cleon, which they speedily put into practice by the capture of Melos and the slaughter of its adult citizens. This episode stands ominously before the

Sicilian expedition. Thucydides does not remark on the cruelty of Athens ; but we feel his indignation to be too deep for words.

The task of continuing the history of Thucydides to the end of the Peloponnesian war and later fell to a man of very different temperament from Thucydides himself. **Xenophon** was born in Attica about 430 B.C. ; he became a disciple of Socrates. In 401 he joined the expedition of Cyrus against his brother, King Artaxerxes. Xenophon, who went as a volunteer, led the Ten Thousand on their famous retreat. In 396 he took service with Agesilaus, King of Sparta, and fought in various campaigns on the Spartan side. He was rewarded by the gift of an estate near Olympia, where he lived for twenty years as a country squire. In letters he was an amateur ; his records of Socrates, of which the *Memorabilia* is the chief, preserve some valuable details, but show little understanding of Socratic teaching. In the *Economicus*, we have a conversation on household and farm-management. The *Anabasis* describes the expedition of Cyrus already mentioned ; it gives an interesting account of the interior of Asia, and reveals the cool bravery and resource of the Greek mercenaries who had chosen Xenophon to lead them home. The *Hellenica*, intended as a continuation of Thucydides, is bald in style, and marred by a prejudice in favour of Sparta and of his own general, Agesilaus. In the *Cyropaedia* Xenophon expresses his own educational ideals. The book professes to describe the elder Cyrus, but the account of his education is chiefly drawn from the

Spartan discipline, with some Persian features, and a few biographical anecdotes. Xenophon was a keen huntsman and lover of the country, but the book on hunting ascribed to him, the *Cynegeticus*, is considered spurious. Xenophon does not write a pure Attic Greek, but his narrative style and his occasional descriptions of scenery are not without simple charm.

Two historians of the second rank flourished in the fourth century. **Theopompus** of Chios wrote a sequel to Xenophon's *Hellenica*, and a history of Philip of Macedonia. **Ephorus** of Cyme wrote a universal history from the coming of the Dorians to 340 B.C. This work was much used by later historians. Both Ephorus and Theopompus were pupils of the great rhetorician Isocrates, whose elaborate style, as the few extant fragments show, they did not fail to imitate. Part of the writings of another historian has recently been found in an Egyptian papyrus. The extant portion deals with the wars of the fourth century. **Cratippus**, an obscure writer of the period, is supposed to be the author.

**PHILOSOPHY**—Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophers*, w. trans.; Benn, *Greek Philosophers*. **HERODOTUS**—Trans., Rawlinson, Macaulay. **THUCYDIDES**—Trans., Jowett. **XENOPHON**—Trans., Dakyns. **GENERAL**—Bury, J. B., *The Ancient Greek Historians*.

## CHAPTER VI

## PHILOSOPHY : PLATO, ARISTOTLE

THE Ionian sages had chiefly busied themselves with speculations on the nature of the material world. It was the glory of Athenian thinkers to lay a scientific basis for ethics, and to construct a workable system of logic. The man whose eccentric genius originated this movement was **Socrates** (469–399 B.C.). His father was a sculptor, but Socrates had a fair general education, and soon forsook his father's craft for his chosen mission of teacher and reformer. A divine voice, heard from time to time in his inmost soul, strengthened his self-confidence, as did the remarkable saying of the Delphic Oracle that no man was wiser than Socrates. He wrote nothing, but imparted his views in talk and cross-examination. He had no respect for venerable fallacies, and had a sure eye for an opponent's weak spot. Traditional doctrines, social, moral, and political, were subjected to a searching criticism, which exasperated the wiseacre and shocked the orthodox. Unlike the Sophists, Socrates took no fees and did not train men for any special career. He was as stimulating to the young and open-minded as he was vexatious to the old and opinionated. At first an object of good-humoured banter, he finally came under the bitter hatred of the democracy. He was suspected of oligarchic leanings. Some of his pupils, Alcibiades, Critias, and Xenophon, had given signal proof of their unpatriotism. After the fall of the Thirty Tyrants



an indictment was brought against Socrates by Anytus, an honest but narrow-minded democrat. He was charged with irreligion and the corruption of youth. Scorning flight or recantation, he was sentenced to death, and met his end with a martyr's courage.

No cosmogony or body of doctrine emanated from Socrates. It is in the aim and method of philosophy that he was an innovator. The axiom of his teaching is that virtue is knowledge. Men sin through ignorance. No one willingly chooses the worse rather than the better. Therefore men must be taught to know the good. The majority of mankind have no clear notions of the moral principles which they obey. Hence Socrates sought for definitions, and arrived at general concepts by inductive reasoning.

Of the various schools of philosophy which claimed descent from Socratic teaching, three may be mentioned. **Antisthenes** (c. 422 B.C.) was the founder of the Cynics, whose doctrines were self-sufficiency and contempt for the world. Later Cynics, like **Diogenes of Sinope** (412-323 B.C.), practised an austere asceticism, which the Greeks as a whole greatly disliked. **Aristippus** of Cyrene and **Epicurus**, the Athenian (342-270 B.C.), may be classed together as regarding happiness to be the aim of life. The former was a hedonist and looked upon pleasure as a good, while the more moderate Epicureans sought rather for tranquillity and absence of pain. The Stoics, of whom **Zeno** (died c. 260 B.C.) was the founder, held that virtue is the highest good, and that a truly wise man is independent of his environ-

ment. This sturdy, uncompromising system appealed in later times to many of the noblest Romans, such as Cato and Marcus Aurelius, while the doctrines of Epicurus were a ready cloak for the pleasure-seeker. The literary remains of these schools are scanty.

Most of our knowledge of Socrates' personality and teaching is due to the ablest of his followers, Plato, the son of Ariston (427-347 B.C.). He came of a noble family and was familiar with all the current philosophic thought of his day, as well as with literature and the other subjects of Athenian education. For eight years he was an ardent disciple of Socrates, and after his death visited Egypt and the west. He had a flattering welcome from the great Sicilian prince Dionysius I; but tyranny was hateful to the philosopher, and he soon returned to Athens, where he set up his school of philosophy at the gymnasium of the Academy. When Dionysius II succeeded his father, Plato was tempted to revisit Syracuse in 367, by the prospect of founding an ideal state on Utopian lines. Dionysius was young and enthusiastic, but when Plato, true to his own doctrines, imposed a course of geometry on the whole court, he presently wearied of the experiment; and Plato left Sicily disappointed.

As Socrates had taught chiefly in conversation, it was natural for Plato to perpetuate his teaching in dialogues. Forty-two of these have come down under Plato's name, besides the *Apology*, a speech put into the mouth of Socrates in his own defence, thirteen mostly spurious letters, and a number of

epigrams. The dialogue has several advantages over a formal treatise. It enables real persons to speak in character, and it allows the vivid presentation of both sides of a question, without committing the writer to a doctrine felt to be uncertain. On the other hand it was a little too easy to make the chief speaker unfailingly elicit answers that strengthened his case ; and when exposition was needed, the trifling comments or assent of the listeners are mere concessions to form. Plato keeps himself wholly in the background, and allows Socrates to dominate his works.

The search for exact definition, and the belief that Virtue is Knowledge, were common to master and disciple, but in other respects it is hard to sift out the truly Socratic elements from the great mass of Platonic teaching. Plato was more of a visionary, and the imaginative passages must be his own creation. His style is ornate and poetical.

In some dialogues little or no positive result is reached. The *Lysis*, for example, is an argument on the nature of friendship. It is held among a group of men and youths who are all friends ; but although many suggestive remarks are made, the main question is left unsolved. So in the *Euthyphro* it is asked, "What is piety?" but no answer is arrived at. In the *Theaetetus* the whole basis of knowledge is subjected to a similar negative process. The *Euthydemus* ridicules the pretensions of the Sophists, of whose influence Plato disapproved.

The *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* are named after the great sophist and the great rhetorician of whom

Plato gives striking descriptions. In the latter dialogue Socrates makes a noble plea for absolute morality against utilitarianism. In the former he takes the other side, and argues that sin is only an error, while virtue is a teachable quality, namely the power of choosing what is really worth having. The same question about virtue is raised in the *Meno*, where the doctrine of Reminiscence is stated. Plato holds that "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting," and that, when the truth is put before us, we remember what we knew in a former state. In two very remarkable dialogues, the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, the Platonic theory of love is revealed, that Eros is one, and that the passion for Truth and the love of the Beautiful are only two manifestations of the same instinct. The *Symposium* or Banquet was given by Agathon, the tragic poet, after a dramatic victory. Aristophanes is among the speakers. The climax of the dialogue is the entrance of the young Alcibiades with some fellow-revellers, and the eulogy of Socrates which he delivers. The *Phaedrus* also contains a more constructive theory of rhetoric and refers favourably to Isocrates, the great teacher of it, to whom Plato elsewhere alludes with disapproval.

In the *Phaedo* is the story of the last hours of Socrates and his inspired discourse on Immortality. The inveterate arguer is true to his nature almost to the last, and plunges into a course of intricate reasoning based largely on Plato's metaphysical system. The death-scene, in its simple pathos, is hardly to be read without tears. Idealistic thinkers of all ages have found inspiration in this dialogue.

Plato's contribution to metaphysics was the theory of Ideas. Ideas are what we call Universals or general concepts. Plato assigned to these an objective existence, in some higher sphere of being, where they are directly apprehended by the souls of the righteous. In this ideal world the Idea of Good is what the sun is in the visible world. Material objects owe their qualities to their likeness to the corresponding Idea. The human mind can only approach to the Ideas by the path of dialectic. Such a system, though not easy to refute, landed its votaries in difficulties of which Plato himself was well aware. What was the exact relation of the Idea to its material copy? Has every object, however mean, an Ideal prototype? To such questions there is no definite answer: but Plato exalts his metaphysics almost into a religion, and, when argument fails, he resorts to the poetical device of a myth. His views of the destiny of the soul hereafter, its reward or punishment, and reincarnation or final beatification, are given in passages of most imaginative eloquence, half mystical, half phantastic, a kind of fiction more deeply true than truth.

The most important of Plato's constructive works is the *Republic*. The question is raised: What is Justice? And it is soon discovered that justice can only exist in an ideal state. This Plato proceeds to describe. The philosophers had little sympathy with democracy. Plato's state is governed by a small caste of "Guardians," who are at once philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, while the ordinary citizens are to be compelled simply to mind their own busi-

ness. The education and life of the Guardians is the main topic of the dialogue. They were to hold property in common, to contract temporary marriages on strictly eugenic lines; parents to have no control over their children's upbringing (indeed they are not to know who their children are), which is to be state-regulated in every detail. Men and women are to be equal and to have the same education. Music and philosophy (including of course mathematics) are its main subjects; poetry, even Homer's, is excluded. A new religion, based on the theory of ideas, with new myths is to be taught. The supreme power is to be wielded by a small council of elders, all true philosophers.

This picture of an ideal state, obviously drawn in part from Sparta, is the prototype of all later Utopias. In the *Laws*, a work of Plato's old age, this ideal scheme is somewhat modified, Plato having perhaps been convinced of the impracticability of his own theories and wishing to adapt them to Athenian taste.

As a writer Plato is remarkably fresh and stimulating: he is constantly throwing out brilliant suggestions which have inspired the most various schools of thought. It is impossible to read him without being thrilled by the enthusiasm of his search for truth, and the higher nature of every man responds instinctively to the loftiness of his moral appeal.

I may be allowed to quote two characteristic passages:

## THE IDEA OF GOOD

“Now, that which imparts truth to the known and the power of knowing to the knower is what I would have you term the idea of good, and this you will deem to be the cause of science, and of truth in so far as the latter becomes the subject of knowledge; beautiful too, as are both truth and knowledge, you will be right in esteeming this other nature as more beautiful than either, and, as in the previous instance, light and sight may be truly said to be like the sun, and yet not to be the sun, so in this other sphere, science and truth may be deemed to be like the good, but not the good; the good has a place of honour yet higher.

“What a wonder of beauty that must be, he said, which is the author of science and truth, and yet surpasses them in beauty; for you surely cannot mean to say that pleasure is the good?

“God forbid, I replied; but may I ask you to consider the image in another point of view?

“In what point of view?

“You would say, would you not, that the sun is not only the author of visibility in all visible things, but of generation and nourishment and growth, though he himself is not generation?

“Certainly.

“In like manner the good may be said to be not only the author of knowledge to all things known, but of their being and essence, and yet the good is not essence, but far exceeds essence in dignity and power.”—(*Republic*, Bk. vi, trans., Jowett.)

## ON THE BEAUTIFUL

“He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation . . . but beauty absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of the earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is.”—(*Symposium*, 211, trans., Jowett.)

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) was born at Stagira on the north coast of the Aegean. He studied rhetoric under Isocrates and philosophy under Plato. Later he became the tutor of Alexander the Great, who was then fourteen years old. In 335 he opened the philosophic school of the Lyceum at Athens. Here



he taught until 323, when he was endangered by a reaction against the Macedonian dominion, of which he approved, and was obliged to leave the city.

Aristotle was both a writer and a lecturer. His school was called Peripatetic, because discourses were given while teacher and pupil were strolling through the groves of the Lyceum. His advanced or esoteric lectures were given from notes, which were treasured by his followers, and perhaps not published in book form until 50 B.C. This accounts for the disconnected style of Aristotle's greater works, while his popular treatises were carefully written and published by the author himself.

Aristotle was a man of encyclopædic knowledge, and his works are said to have reached four hundred in number. In natural science he was a shrewd observer, as his books on zoology and astronomy prove. Logic and metaphysics (so named from coming *after* his *Physics*) he regarded as fundamental sciences. In the *Metaphysics* he enunciates the principle of the Four Causes, formal, material, efficient, and final. He attacks the Platonic theory of the *Ideas*, allowing them no objective existence. In the *Ethics* he arrives at practical definitions of Happiness and Virtue, and develops his view of the Golden Mean. Each good quality is the mean between two bad ones, *e.g.* courage between cowardice and foolhardiness; truthfulness between self-depreciation and boastfulness. In this connection Aristotle gives a picture of the high-minded man, whose conscious merit is the crown of all the other virtues: Christian humility was certainly not among these. Having found certain principles for

the conduct of the individual, Aristotle naturally passes to consider in what kind of state his principles are best exercised. In the *Politics*, a work owing much to Plato, Aristotle gives his ideal constitution, which is to be a small city-state under a carefully-trained aristocratic government. Plato's wilder theories were as unacceptable to Aristotle as the imperial ambitions of Alexander. Criticism of actual constitutions and a system of education for the governing class hold an important place in the treatise. Aristotle had a high opinion of music in character training. The *Constitution of Athens*, discovered in a papyrus in 1885, is the one survivor of 158 popular handbooks on Greek forms of government.

The *Poetics* is an incomplete work on poetry and drama, the chief extant portion dealing with tragedy. Aristotle's canons were partly versified in Horace's *Ars Poetica*, and have been regarded since the sixteenth century as almost oracular. To him we owe the notion of the purification of the emotions by pity and terror as an essential function of tragedy, the first hint of the Unities of the drama, and the suggestion that Art is an improved imitation of nature. In his criticism of the Attic stage Aristotle is fair and acute, and though the attempts made to apply his canons directly to modern drama have not always succeeded, there is no doubt that the *Poetics* laid the foundation of scientific literary criticism.

Aristotle regarded rhetoric, the art of persuasion, as akin to dialectic. In the work which bears that name he first considers the nature of proof and the

rhetorical syllogism or enthymeme; next the relation of the speaker to his audience, and the effect of his character upon them; and finally prose rhythm and style. Aristotle strongly objected to exaggerated and poetical turns, and condemned the irrelevance and appeal to the passions too often tolerated in the Athenian law courts.

To every subject Aristotle brought a methodical mind stored with immense learning. He was a great systematiser and co-ordinator, classifying facts and equipping science with exact terms and definitions. The mediæval lore of the Schoolmen was based upon his work. But besides the oddities of his style there is a certain dry intellectuality in Aristotle which makes us feel that Plato with all his mistakes and unpractical dreams is a more inspiring and greater teacher. Yet in rare moments Aristotle too rises to enthusiasm, as when in the *Ethics* he shows the divine dignity of the contemplative life, or in his ode in praise of Virtue he likens her to a maiden wooed of many in Greece, but to be won only by arduous toil.

Theophrastus (372-287 B.C.), the successor of Aristotle at the Lyceum, has left us two treatises on botany and a small series of psychological portraits called *Characters*. The bulk of his work is lost. Psychology was the main interest in the writings of Theophrastus' friend, the great dramatist Menander, and here too we have a mild satire, not devoid of humour, on various types of vice and folly, such as Cowardice, Superstition, or Petty Vanity. Theophrastus is severe on the ill-treatment of slaves,

but otherwise deals more with outward faults of bearing than with moral depravity.

PLATO—Trans., Jowett ; Davies and Vaughan, *Repub.*  
ARISTOTLE—Trans., Welldon, *Pol. Rhet. Eth.* ; M'Mahon, *Metaph.* ; Peters, *Ethics* ; Owen, *Logic*, &c. ; Misc. works trans., edd. Smith and Ross. POETICS—Text with trans., Butcher, Bywater. THEOPHRASTUS — Trans., Jebb.  
GENERAL — Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers* ; Nettleship, *Lectures on Republic of Plato* ; Pater, *Plato and Platonism*.

## CHAPTER VII

### ORATORY : ISOCRATES, DEMOSTHENES

MENTION has already been made of the teaching of the Rhetoricians at Athens. The first native orator of distinction whose writings have survived is **Antiphon** (c. 480–411 B.C.). Politically an extreme oligarch, he took part in the revolution of the 400, and was implicated in intrigues with Sparta. On the fall of the 400 he was tried for treason and executed. His defence at this trial was his most famous speech. A number of model speeches, written for the instruction of his pupils, all dealing with murder cases, are extant, besides three actual court pleadings. Antiphon shows the influence of Sicilian rhetoric, and makes free use of moral common-places and the argument from probability. His style, which is stiff and archaic, resembles that of Thucydides.

**Andocides** (c. 440–390 B.C.) was implicated in the mutilation of the Hermae just before the Sicilian

expedition in 415. He was arrested on suspicion, but allowed to escape on informing against others. About 410 he made the extant speech *On the Return*, claiming pardon for his old offence; he did not, however, succeed until the amnesty of 403. A few years later the original charge was again brought up, and Andocides defended himself in his best-known speech *On the Mysteries*, which it was alleged the old sentence debarred him from attending. The speech contains a tortuous account of the conspiracy. Andocides was acquitted and went in 391 on a mission to Sparta, after which his speech *On the Peace* was delivered. His style is simple and sometimes trivial, seldom impressive.

**Lysias** (c. 440–380 B.C.) was the son of a Sicilian and lived at Athens as an alien. For his services in the democratic restoration in 403 it was proposed to confer citizenship on Lysias. The motion passed the Assembly but was overruled on technical grounds, so that he continued to reside as an alien but employed himself in speech-writing.

In the Athenian law courts every litigant was obliged to plead his own case, but there was nothing to prevent him from procuring a speech written by a professional and then reciting it to the jury. Nearly all the so-called private orations of the Attic orators were intended to be delivered in this way. Lysias had a special skill in fitting his style to the character of the litigant. His manner was simple and persuasive, with natural eloquence and apparent sincerity; he was skilled in inventing attractive introductions. His Greek is a pure and graceful Attic.

In the *Phaedrus* a show-speech attributed to Lysias is quoted and by many critics it is thought to be genuine. Plato disapproved of the profession of Lysias but admired his style.

On the restoration of the democracy in 403, Lysias prosecuted one of the tyrants who were responsible for the death of his brother. The speech *Against Eratosthenes* is Lysias' greatest achievement. It contains a vivid and dramatic account of the misdeeds of the Thirty. Over 400 speeches were assigned to Lysias in antiquity, of which about thirty survive.

**Isaeus** (c. 389–352 B.C.) was an imitator of Lysias, though less skilful in impersonating character. His style is more artificial. Eleven speeches are extant, all dealing with inheritance cases.

**Isocrates** (436–338 B.C.) was the greatest Athenian teacher of rhetoric. He opened his school in 393 and trained the chief orators of his time. His success roused the jealousy of philosophers, as we gather from Plato. Isocrates had no power of delivery, and his chief works appeared as pamphlets in which he dealt with the great political questions of the day. Twenty-one speeches and nine letters survive. His chief production was the *Panegyricus*. The leading idea is that the Greeks must combine against Persia under such a leader as Philip of Macedon. In the *Panathenaicus* (342) he delivers a panegyric on Athens. Isocrates bestowed extraordinary pains on the composition of speeches, and perfected the periodic style. He made a rule of the absolute avoidance of hiatus. Although we feel that form

is more than substance in such oratorical displays, yet Isocrates is an undeniable master of his own art.

**Demosthenes** (384–322 B.C.) was the greatest of Athenian orators. He was early left an orphan, and was defrauded by his guardian, whom he subsequently prosecuted with success. After an arduous training he became a brilliant public speaker as well as an accomplished speech-writer for the courts. His *Private Orations* show a great power of narrative and of refuting an opponent's argument. But it was in political cases and in the Assembly that he found his true sphere. He excelled all others in swaying the passions of the Athenian populace. The history of Demosthenes' oratorical career is the history of Athens. At first he leads the opposition to the cautious policy of Enbulus. But the latter was well-suited to the unwarlike temper of the Athenians, and Demosthenes was usually unsuccessful. The advance of the Macedonian power began to alarm Athenian patriots, and Demosthenes spares no effort to rouse his countrymen to make a stand against Philip. In the *First Philippic* he eloquently exhorts the people to arm against the northern invader and to shrink from no sacrifice to make resistance effective. The Assembly, however, refused to be roused. In 349, when Philip was attacking Chalcidice, Demosthenes in his *Olynthiac Orations* urges that a citizen-army should be sent to help Olynthus, the chief town of the district, and that the festival fund, from which the people were supplied with free seats in the theatre, should be used for the war. But his advice was taken too late.

After the peace of Philostratus (346) Demosthenes turned his energy against the Macedonian party. In the speech *Against Midias*, with whom he had a private feud, Demosthenes displays a rare power of invective. In a speech *On the False Embassy* he attacks unsuccessfully his great rival Aeschines. By 340 he had persuaded the Athenians to break entirely with Philip and to devote the festival fund to the war. In 338 Philip invaded Greece, and Demosthenes induced the Thebans to make an alliance with Athens against Macedonia. The Greeks were defeated at Chaeronea, and the policy of Demosthenes was discredited. In 330 Aeschines brought an action against Ctesiphon, who had proposed that Demosthenes should have a gold crown for his public services. This action gave Demosthenes the chance of vindicating his whole career in the grandest of his speeches, *On the Crown*. The result was a complete triumph, and Aeschines was obliged to leave Athens. Demosthenes was involved in the abortive rising after the death of Alexander. The Macedonian general Antipater demanded his surrender, to avoid which Demosthenes took poison.

The style of Demosthenes is highly rhythmical, with a careful balance of clauses, but his manner is generally simple. He is stronger in invective than pathos, and his personality, keen and enthusiastic, dominates everything that he wrote. Indeed his genius as an orator made him less effective as a statesman; he was led astray by patriotic fervour to overrate the possibilities of Athens in his time. The great days of Periclean imperialism could not



be recalled by any art of words, and in his fierce opposition to Macedonia Demosthenes has incurred the blame of scientific historians. But this was the noble error of a true patriot, and there was nothing that made his speeches effective so much as the heartfelt enthusiasm for the freedom of Greece with which he was inspired.

**Aeschines** (*fl.* 357–330 B.C.) was the great rival of Demosthenes and supporter of Macedonian interests at Athens. Demosthenes tried to prosecute him for treason in 345, but Aeschines diverted the attack by exposing in his speech *Against Timarchus* the private misconduct of Demosthenes' coadjutor. Again in 343 Aeschines, in an eloquent speech *On the False Embassy*, successfully defended himself against the impeachment laid by Demosthenes. He had another triumph at Delphi, where he turned the anger of the Amphictyonic Council, who were threatening Athens with a Sacred War, against the Amphisians on a charge of sacrilege. In 330 he signally failed, as has been said, in his prosecution of Ctesiphon. His speech is extant, but its effectiveness falls far short of Demosthenes' masterpiece. After this reverse he withdrew to Rhodes and lived as a teacher. Although Aeschines was a self-made man, and an unscrupulous politician, he had high oratorical powers; and his readiness in *extempore* speaking, with no small gift of invective and vigorous description, atoned for his lack of professional training. His style is somewhat theatrical, and admits poetical words. As a paid intriguer in the Macedonian cause he can lay no claim to the high patriotic fervour of

Demosthenes. But the latter too, it must be remembered, was not above taking a present, and the verdict of history tends to justify the policy of Aeschines.

**Hyperides** (389–322 B.C.) was a statesman of the Demosthenic party, and an energetic agitator against Macedonia, who prosecuted in political trials some of the Macedonian agents. He fell into the hands of the conquerors after the Lamian war, and was put to death. On one occasion he appeared against Demosthenes, when the latter had appropriated some of the money brought to Athens by Harpalus, the absconding treasurer of Alexander. Demosthenes was fined. The chief surviving speech of political importance is the *Funeral Oration* for the fallen in the Lamian war. It shows the smooth, limpid, and pathetic style for which Hyperides was famous. This speech and several private pleadings have been recovered in Egyptian papyri. The art of Hyperides, lacking the dignity of the great political orators, was specially effective in cases where the personal element was strong, as in his famous defence of Phryne, the reigning beauty, and in the extant speech *Against Athenogenes*, exposing the fraud of an Egyptian scent-maker. The critic Longinus showers praise on Hyperides, but only intends to prove that with all his technical perfection he fell far short of the genius of Demosthenes.

**Lycurgus** (c. 390–324 B.C.) also belonged to the patriotic party. He studied under Isocrates, and became the chief financial minister of Athens. He was energetic in beautifying the city, and the Theatre

of Dionysus, still remaining on the south side of the Acropolis, was built under his administration. He also published official acting editions of the great Attic playwrights. Love of country made him a stern avenger of disloyalty and cowardice. His one extant speech, *Against Leocrates*, is aimed at one who had fled from Athens after the disaster at Chaeronea, and whom on his return Lycurgus impeaches on a capital charge. The attack was extremely bitter, and the accused barely escaped. The speech is full of quotations, including thirty-two lines of Tyrtaeus.

GENERAL—Jebb, *Attic Orators*. DEMOSTHENES—Trans. : Collier, Kennedy, Leland.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN AGES

AFTER Alexander's conquests, and the consequent expansion of the Greek race over a great part of the Levant, Greek was established as the court-language of the Hellenistic princes, and became the general means of communication among educated people. But it was no longer the old tongue. The ancient dialects begin to die out, and we find on the one hand a new popular speech, and on the other a literary idiom, upholding most of the Attic tradition, and becoming less and less akin to the spoken language. Between these stood the so-called Koine or common dialect, as the ordinary written medium used throughout the Greek world. This persisted

with some changes and varying degrees of purity during the Roman and Byzantine ages, and finally resulted in the literary Greek of the present day.

The more popular tongue is known to us from innumerable papyri discovered in Egypt. Here we see Greek used in business documents, letters, contracts, and all every-day concerns. The language of the Septuagint and New Testament is virtually the same as this. Its main features are the loss of many idioms, greater simplicity of construction with fewer subordinate clauses, and probably some Oriental or Hebrew influence. As the language of Holy Scripture it has coloured all Christian literature, and is the ancestress of spoken modern Greek ; but the more ambitious Greek writers of all ages, and on all subjects, have aimed at a higher classical diction.

### POETRY

An artificial language has a worse effect on verse than on prose : it checks the fancy, and never reaches the heart of the people. Most of the later Greek poets write for a select cultured audience, and as they became the models for much of Latin poetry, their faults of stiffness and pedantry were borrowed by Rome from the school of Alexandria.

But two new poetical forms appear, the *Idyll* and the *Mime*, which were meant for a wider public.

### THE IDYLL

It was reserved for the Hellenistic age to give pastoral poetry an artistic form. The town-life of the great cities created a desire for refreshment among

rural scenes. Theocritus was the first to adapt the rude strains of Sicilian shepherds to the taste of cultured readers. The subjects of these rustic poems were taken from native folklore. Thus the works of Theocritus are purely artificial productions ; but his inimitable grace, his love of nature, his pathos, and his humour make him one of the most delightful of Greek poets. His popularity in antiquity was boundless ; and he set the model for all later idyllists. He lived c. 310-270 B.C. partly at Cos, partly in Sicily, as well as at Alexandria. Besides his poems of rustic life, he wrote short epics, epigrams, and two idylls of town life, one of which, describing the visit of two Sicilian ladies to the festival of Adonis, is among the most humorous poems of antiquity.

I quote the tenth idyll, which shows that blend of sentiment with playful irony beloved by Theocritus :

*Two reapers, MILO and BATTUS.*

M. What now, poor o'erworked drudge, is on thy mind ?

No more in even swathe thou layest the corn :

Thy fellow-reapers leave thee far behind,

As flocks a ewe that's footsore from a thorn.

By noon and midday what will be thy plight

If now, so soon, thy sickle fails to bite ?

B. Hewn from hard rocks, untired at set of sun,

Milo, didst ne'er regret some absent one ?

M. Not I. What time have workers for regret ?

B. Hath love ne'er kept thee from thy slumbers yet ?

M. Nay, heaven forbid ! If once the cat taste cream !

B. Milo, these ten days love hath been my dream.

M. You drain your wine, while vinegar's scarce with me.

B. Hence since last spring untrimmed my borders be.

- M.* What lass flouts thee ? *B.* She whom we heard play  
Amongst Hippocoön's reapers yesterday.
- M.* Your sins have found you out—you're e'en served right :  
You'll clasp a corn-crake in your arms all night.
- B.* You laugh : but headstrong Love is blind no less  
Than Plutus : talking big is foolishness.
- M.* I talk not big. But lay the corn-ears low  
And trill the while some love-song—easier so  
Will seem your toil : you used to sing, I know.
- B.* Maids of Pieria, of my slim lass sing !  
One touch of yours ennobles everything.

(*Sings*) Fairy Bombyca ! thee do men report  
Lean, dusk, a gipsy : I alone nut-brown.  
Violets and pencilled hyacinths are swart,  
Yet first of flowers they're chosen for a crown.  
As goats pursue the clover, wolves the goat,  
And cranes the ploughman, upon thee I dote.

Had I but Croesus' wealth, we twain should stand  
Gold-sculptured in Love's temple ; thou, thy lyre  
(Ay or a rose or apple) in thy hand,  
I in my brave new shoon and dance-attire.  
Fairy Bombyca ! twinkling dice thy feet,  
Poppies thy lips, thy ways none knows how sweet !

- M.* Who dreamed what subtle strains our bumpkin wrought ?  
How shone the artist in each measured verse !  
Fie on the beard that I have grown for naught !  
Mark, lad, these lines, by glorious Lytierse.

(*Sings*) O rich in fruit and cornblade : be this field  
Tilled well, Demeter, and fair fruitage yield !

Avoid a noontide nap, ye threshing men :  
The chaff flies thickest from the corn-ears then.

Wake when the lark wakes ; when he slumbers, close  
Your work, ye reapers : and at noontide doze.

Boys, the frogs' life for me ! They need not him  
Who fills the flagon, for in drink they swim.

Better boil herbs, thou toiler after gain,  
Than splitting cummin, split thy hand in twain.

Strains such as these, I trow, befit them well  
Who toil and moil when noon is at its height :  
Thy meagre love-tale, bumpkin, thou shouldst tell  
Thy grandam as she wakes up ere 'tis light.  
(Trans. C. S. Calverley.)

Theocritus' imitators, **Bion** and **Moschus**, though not lacking in poetical feeling, have no true love of the country, nor possess the imagination of their master.

#### THE MIME—HERODAS (*fl.* c. 300–250 B.C.)

A *Mime* is a dramatic sketch, usually of humble life, performed by one actor.

Herodas is a sheer realist. His metre (the *scazon*) is harsh and unpoetical. He shrinks from no extremity of vice or horror ; but his sketches are wonderfully true and lifelike, however sordid or repulsive. Of his seven surviving mimes we may mention No. 3, in which a woman brings a disobedient son to be flogged by a schoolmaster, who positively gloats over the task. In No. 4 two women visit the temple of Aesclepius at Cos, where they admire paintings by Apelles, and make fatuous comments. No. 5 depicts the fury of a jealous woman who orders a slave, whom she has loved, a thousand lashes. She then relents and countermands the order.

## THE FABLE

Only one other writer of the more popular order needs mentioning. This is **Babrius** (first or second century A.D.), who versified in simple language the fables going under the name of Aesop. The latter is a somewhat mythical figure, placed in the sixth century B.C., and whose fables must have been largely traditional. Babrius is not without merit as a writer, and his work has been a school-book in all ages.

## THE EPIGRAM

An epigram was originally an inscription on some object, usually a votive offering, statue, or tomb. Later the form embodied moral or lyrical sentiments, descriptions, or gibes.

This branch of poetry was successfully cultivated down to the Byzantine age. It needed no sustained inspiration, and encouraged the ingenuity of inferior minds. Nevertheless the best Greek epigrams are unmatched in their own field. **Theocritus**, **Callimachus**, **Alexander** of Aetolia, and **Leonidas** of Tarentum (all about the third century B.C.) were the chief early epigrammatists. Leonidas is notable for his love of the sea.

**Meleager** (c. 60 B.C.) made a collection of epigrams enriched with many of his own. He is pre-eminently a love-poet. His verse is full of poetic fire and an Oriental richness, due partly to his Syrian origin.

In the Roman age **Philippus** (first century), **Strato** of Sardis (age of Hadrian), the latter mainly a love-poet, were notable. The grammarian **Palladas**



(fifth century), and **Agathias** (c. A D. 550), and many others wrote epigrams. Agathias also made a collection, which was partly absorbed in that of **Maximus Planudes** (fourteenth century), known to us as the *Anthologia Palatina*, in which the most famous epigrams are preserved.

Translations from the Anthology have often been made. I quote a few :

“ A child of five short years, unknown to woe,  
Callimachus my name, I rest below.  
Mourn not my fate. If few the joys of life,  
Few were its ills, its conflicts ; brief its strife.”

LUCIAN, trans. T. Farley.

*Thais in advancing Years.*

“ Venus, take my votive glass,  
Since I am not what I was :  
What from this day I shall be,  
Venus, let me never see.”

[PLATO], trans. Prior.

“ Thou sleep'st, soft silken flower. Would I were Sleep,  
For ever on those lids my watch to keep.  
So should I have thee all my own ; nor he,  
Who seals Love's wakeful eyes, my rival be.”

MELEAGER, trans. J. H. Merivale.

“ The stars, my Star, thou view'st ; heaven might I be,  
That I with many eyes might gaze on thee.”

[PLATO], trans. T. Stanley

## LYRIC POETRY

The so-called *Anacreontea*, poems of various dates, mostly written in iambic half-lines, artificial but not unhappy imitations of Anacreon, are the nearest

approach to lyric poetry in this age. Although none of these sound the true note of passion, and suggest the schoolmaster rather than the lover, they are easy, pleasant reading, and have often been admired and translated. Only a few pedants experimented in the older lyric metres, for, as poetry was now to read not to sing, there was no advantage in elaborate song-forms.

#### LEARNED POETRY—THE ALEXANDRINE EPIC AND DIDACTIC SCHOOL

Aratus of Soli (*fl.* c. 276 B.C.) lived at the court of Antigonus Gonatas, King of Macedonia, and wrote a work on astronomy called *Phenomena*. The metre is the Homeric hexameter, and the poem, though of small poetical merit, is correct in form, and was much admired in antiquity. Cicero translated it.

Callimachus, after studying at Athens, became librarian at Alexandria under Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 B.C.). He is said to have written 800 books on literary, historical, and religious subjects, including many poems in the elegiac metre. Of his hymns and epigrams many survive. But his longest poem, on the origins of myths (*Aitiaï*), is lost, while the best known, the *Lock of Berenice*, is extant only in Catullus' Latin version.

Apollonius Rhodius became librarian at Alexandria under Ptolemy Epiphanes (205–181 B.C.). He wrote several learned epics, of which the most important, the *Argonautica*, survives. It deals with Jason's cruise for the Golden Fleece, and was imitated by Valerius Flaccus. In attempting a long epic in the

manner of Homer, Apollonius was opposing the doctrines of his master, Callimachus. The latter advocated the newer forms, such as the short epic and elegy. A bitter literary quarrel ensued between the two poets and their admirers. Apollonius writes Homeric Greek with ease, adding new poetical turns. His descriptions of places and treatment of emotion are good—for example, the account of Jason's meeting with Medea in a temple. But his narrative is lifeless, and he digresses too much on antiquarian matters.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, a time of great literary activity, we see the final effort of pagan epic.

**Nonnus** of Panopolis in Egypt (fifth century A.D.) wrote a poem in forty-eight books on the Myth of Dionysus. He modified the Homeric hexameter to suit the current pronunciation of Greek, where quantity was no longer heard. His style, like that of the earlier Alexandrians, is rich in poetical words and phrases; but he is prone to extravagance and bathos. Thus Mount Cithaeron weeps, Dionysus dances in his mother's womb, and Atlas spins the heavens on his shoulders. Late in life Nonnus became a Christian and versified the Fourth Gospel. His follower **Musaeus** (date uncertain) wrote an epic of 340 lines on the legend of Leander and Hero. This has been called "the last rose in the fading garden of Greek poetry." Musaeus, like his master, was converted, and may have found fresh inspiration in the new Faith, which now claimed the greatest intellects of his time.

## PROSE

Of the historians of the Hellenistic age only trifling fragments remain. The rise of the Roman empire was a theme that inspired one of the most notable men of the second century B.C., the statesman and traveller **Polybius**. Sent to Rome as a hostage of the Achæan League, he became the friend of Scipio the Younger. Shortly after his exile the fall of Corinth brought Greece finally under the power of Rome. Polybius was convinced that the imperial career of Rome was the will of Heaven. He accompanied Scipio in the last campaign against Carthage, and he brought to the study of history the experience of a statesman and a soldier's eye. His history in forty books extended from the first Punic war to 144 B.C. Only five whole books remain ; but these are enough to make him the leading authority for the Punic wars, the Achæan League, and the earlier Roman wars of conquest. In the collection of material Polybius was very conscientious ; in impartiality and clear-sightedness he is the true successor of Thucydides, but, unlike his model, he despises style. This fault was partly due to a reaction against his rhetorical predecessors, whom he often attacks for their historical incompetence. His dialect resembles the common speech of the day.

**Diodorus Siculus** (c. 40 B.C.) wrote a universal history down to Cæsar's Gallic war. His arrangement is annalistic, but is not free from confusion. In covering such a vast period he was obliged to borrow uncritically from historians of varying merit.

But for many periods he is our sole authority. Outside a few studied battle-pieces his style is tedious.

Two geographical writers deserve mention. **Strabo** (c. 54 B.C.—A.D. 24) in his *Geography* describes most of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Though not always accurate, the work is pleasantly written and gives valuable information. **Pausanias** (second century A.D.) wrote a *Description of Greece* based on his own travels, giving an account of the chief cities and their monuments. The past had more charm for this author than the present, and we owe to him many details of ancient history, archæology, and religion.

Most of the historians of the Roman age have little literary interest. An exception must be made for **Arrian** (c. A.D. 95–175). A native of Asia, he strove to return to a pure Attic style. His chief work is the *Anabasis* of Alexander the Great, a historical work of some merit.

The most popular writer of the age was **Plutarch** of Chaeronea (born c. A.D. 50). His best-known work, the *Parallel Lives*, has been the delight of subsequent ages. The lives, numbering forty-eight, are nearly all arranged in pairs, one Greek and one Roman, on the basis of some similarity in the circumstances. Plutarch is a biographer, not a historian. His chief interest is in character and conduct, which he illustrates by anecdote and reminiscence. His miscellaneous works deal with a great variety of moral, religious, and literary subjects. In religion he was an allegorist, and tried to interpret the old religion spiritually. He attacks the Epicureans, and expounds Egyptian theology. It may be said that

we have more general information about antiquity from Plutarch than from any other single writer.

Two treatises on literature belong to this age ; that of **Demetrius** on *Style*, a discussion of the art of prose writing, based on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* ; and a work *On the Sublime*, assigned to **Longinus** (died A.D. 273). This is one of the world's best critical essays. The author had a faultless taste and a glowing enthusiasm for ancient poetry.

The most successful of the Atticists was **Lucian** of Samosata (c. A.D. 125–200). He was born in poverty, and earned a precarious livelihood as a travelling rhetorician and lecturer. His Attic style is singularly pure ; he also studied philosophy and revived the dialogue as a literary form. He uses mythology as a subject for jest, and shows a very subtle sense of humour. In a superstitious age he attacked credulity and helped to undermine the old religion. Against the pretensions of philosophers and rhetoricians he is mercilessly sarcastic. His own style is remarkably easy and smooth, and not overloaded with rhetorical devices.

**THEOCRITUS**, &c.—Trans., verse, Calverley ; prose, Lang. **HERODAS**—Trans., verse, Sharpely. **ANTHOLOGY**—Select trans., prose, Mackail ; verse, Grundy. **ANACREONTEA** — Trans., verse, Addison, Moore. **MUSÆUS** — Trans., verse, Chapman. **POLYBIUS** — Trans., Shuckburgh. **STRABO** — Trans., Hamilton and Falconer. **PAUSANIAS**—Trans., Frazer. **PLUTARCH**—*Lives*, trans., Langhorne. **LONGINUS**—Trans., Havell, Stebbing. **LUCIAN**—Trans., Fowler

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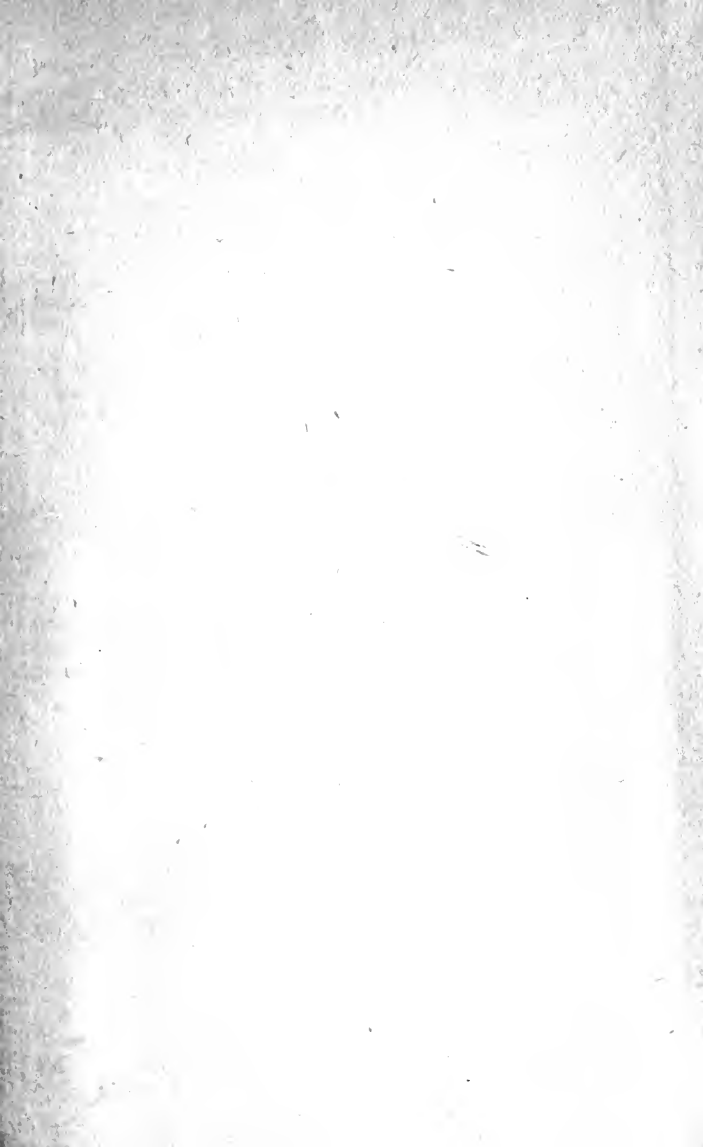
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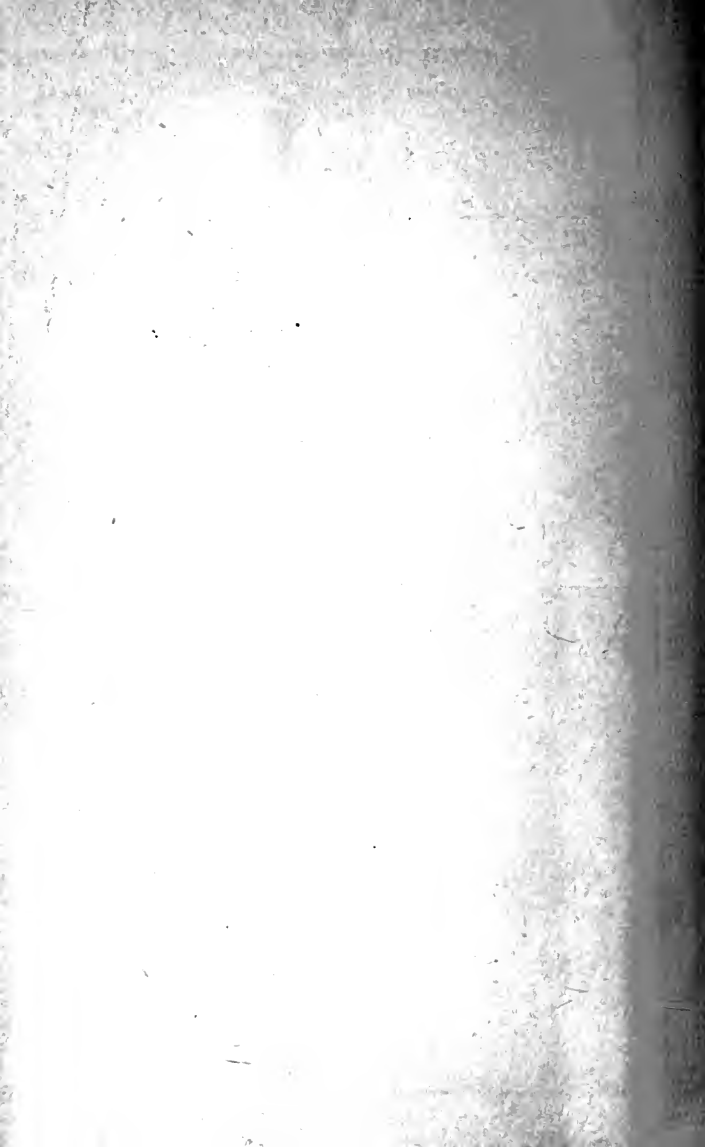
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